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Do ‘chickens dream only of grain’? Uncovering the social role of poultry in Ethiopia

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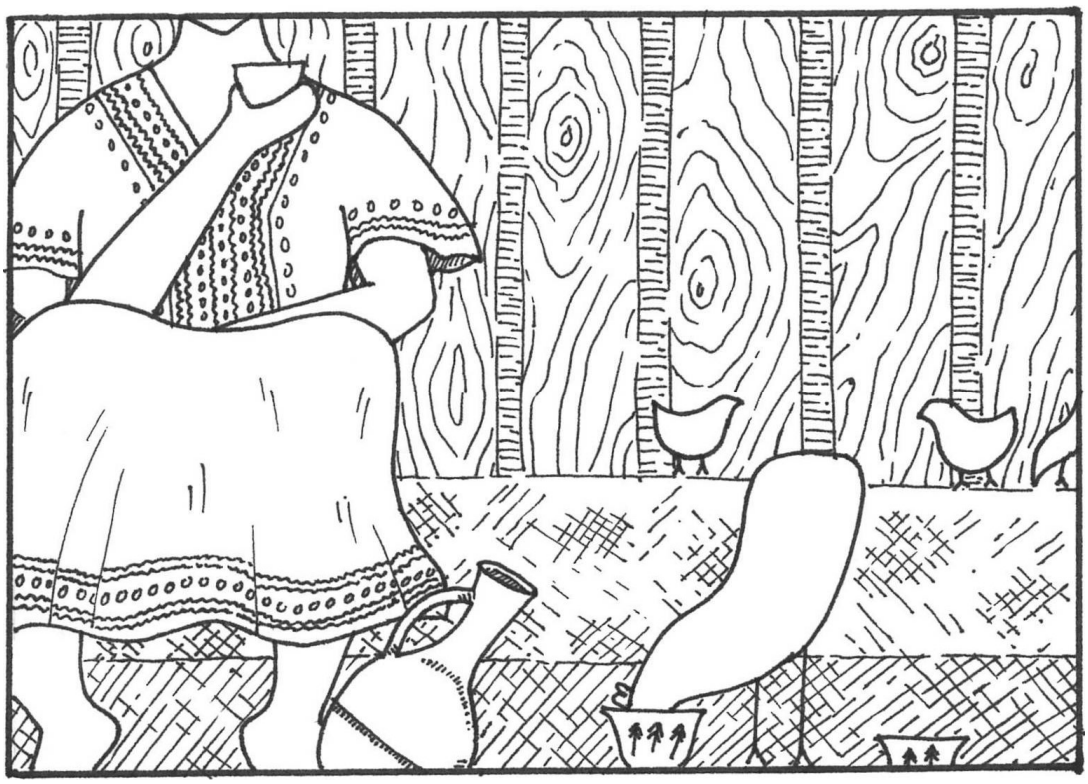

Do '*chickens dream only of grain*'?

Uncovering the social role of poultry in Ethiopia.

By

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Abstract

The Amharic proverb ‘Chickens dream only of grain’ could easily describe our own lack of imagination when thinking about poultry. In the sectors of agriculture and development, there is growing recognition of how chickens could be used in poverty alleviation, as a source of income and protein, and a means of gender empowerment. However, interventions do not always achieve their goals, due to a lack of understanding of the local context in which chickens will be consumed. In Ethiopia, chickens have an ongoing role not just as economic tools, but in relationships between people and with the religious and spiritual realm.

During a period of fieldwork of one year in the Amhara region, in the northern highlands of Ethiopia, I explored the roles that chickens play in the household and wider society. The association between poultry and women, reflected in both practice and language, is changing in peri-urban areas, where production is commercialised, bringing into question the feasibility of improved poultry breeds as a means of empowerment of women. Beyond their economic use, the slaughter of chickens plays an important role in mediating relationships with the spirits that populate the landscape in Amhara. The consumption of chickens reinforces relationships within a household, social networks, and ultimately as a form of building nationality. The types of chickens chosen for these forms of consumption demonstrates strong preferences, and may explain the resistance to improved chicken breeds that have been introduced since the 1950s. The practices around chickens also give some insight into some of the ways in which Amhara society is changing.

Contents

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"*Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone*"

– GB Stern

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List of figures and illustrations

Abbreviations

ACSA	Amhara Credit and Savings Institute
CSA	Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia
EA	Extension Agent
EIAR	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
ND	Newcastle Disease
PA	Peasants Association

Notes on Pronunciation

Amharic is written using the syllabary of Ge'ez, the language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, sometimes also referred to as Classical Ethiopic. I have adopted for the most part, the transcription system used by Appleyard[1].

There are 27 consonants, most of which have the same sound as in English:

b, **p**, **d**, **j**, **t**, **m**, **n**, **f**, **w**, **s** (as in '**s**ing'), **z**, **y**, **g** (as in '**g**o'), **k**, **l** (as in '**l**ight'), **r**, and **v** (only occurs in words borrowed from English)

Some special letters represent sounds similar to English:

č – '**ch**' as in 'chur**ch**'
š – '**sh**' as in '**sh**oe'
ž – '**s**' as 'lei**s**ure'
ñ – as in '**n**ews, or the Spanish ma**ñ**ana

Glottalised, or explosive consonants are represented with an apostrophe. The more common representations of the explosive k is '**q**', and of the explosive s is '**ts**', so I have used these instead throughout the text.

t' – explosive t
q – explosive k
p' – explosive p
č' – explosive č, like the first '**ch**' in '**ch**urch'
ts – explosive s

Double consonants are not represented in the syllabary, only in spoken Amharic. Thus where necessary I have indicated these with double letters, indicating a need to clearly pronounce both letters.

There are seven orders of vowel sounds:

1st order	**ä**	like the first '**a**' in '**a**gain', but may be changed by surrounding consonants
2nd order	**u**	like the '**oo**' in 'm**oo**n'
3rd order	**i**	like the '**ee**' in 'f**ee**t'
4th order	**a**	like the '**a**' in 'f**a**ther'
5th order	**e**	like the vowel in 'g**a**te' or 'w**a**y', but without the final 'y' sound
6th order	**ï**	a short and changeable sound, like the '**e**' in 'wound**e**d'
7th order	**o**	like vowel in 'sh**o**re' or 'w**a**r'

[1] Appleyard, D (2013) Colloquial Amharic: the complete course for beginners. 2nd Edition. Routledge.

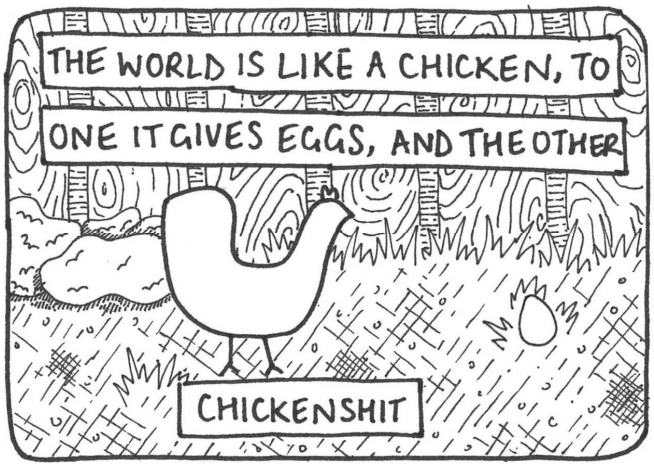
Both first order and sixth order vowel sounds are dependent on the consonants that surround them. Thus ‘ä’ in ‘wät’, is pronounced more like the ‘a’ in ‘what’. It is most commonly transcribed into English as ‘wot’ (although ‘wat’ is sometimes seen instead). To avoid the use of diacritics, proper names, place names, or common words, are often written slightly differently in practice in Ethiopia. This is not always consistent, for example Märawi becomes both Merawi and Meraye. Where conventions exist for spelling, I have used this, for example, Addis Ababa, instead of Addis Abäba (or Addis Abeba).

Glossary

Abay	local name for the Blue Nile
acher igir	chicken thigh - see **[Food]**
ambesha	a type of leavened bread
and amist	'One - five', an agricultural extension program
araqi	local liquor
aras	a woman who has recently given birth - see **[House]**
atakilt	vegetables
atär	field peas
awaqi	practioner (refers to witchcraft)
awra	cockerel
bal	culture
balagenda	zar practioner - see **[Spirits]**
beqolo	maize, also known as *mashila*
berbere	mixture of spices and chilli
bet	house, hence '*shay bet*' is a tea house, and '*tälla bet*' is a beer house
buda	evil eye - see **[Spirits]**
buna	coffee
chafi	scented grass, used to line floor for coffee ceremony and special occasions
chat, qat	shrub, chewed as a stimulant
chigot	mud-built shelves
däbtära	trainee priest - see **[Spirits]**
dagusa	finger millet
dangilay	chicken colour - red and white
demet	cat
dereb, dimdim	chicken comb type - double
Derg	the military council that overthrew the Ethiopian Empire
dinïch	potatoes
doro	chicken
ferenji	foreigner
fereseña	back part of chicken - see **[Food]**
fingal, fengel	chicken disease - see **[Extensive]**
firfir	a dish made from *injera* cooked in spiced sauce
fot, sululti	mongoose
gabi	large handmade cloth, worn draped around upper body
gäbäre	farmer
gebs	barley
gebsoma	barley-coloured
genfo	porridge
Ghion	local name for the Blue Nile
gint	scorpion
gomen	cabbage

gomenzer	mustard
got	village
gult	fief-holding rights
habesha	ethiopia
hakim	doctor
iddir	funeral association
imnet	ash, from church
injera	flat bread, made from fermented grains
insera	clay pot
iqqub	savings association
jigara	guinea fowl
jinn	type of spirit - see **[Spirits]**
kabaro	fox
karot	carrot
kerempt	summer' - the long rainy season
kolo	roasted grain snack
kot	chicken shelter – either in the form of a wooden shelf above the door, or small wooden structures outside the home
kunf	chicken wing - see 'Food'
libebahar	chicken colour - red and white
lideta	birthday
lij	child
mashila	maize, also known as beqolo
mazor	to rotate, ceremony - see **[Spirits]**
mehaber	religious association
melalacha	chicken breast - see **[Food]**
mesob	woven table, used to serve and store
misir	lentil
näch	white
netela	chicken comb type – single
nug	niger seed
qeb	pullet
qebele	neighbourhood, village
qolle	type of spirit - see **[Spirits]**
qunas, qimal, qinqin	lice, parasite
qwanta	dried meat
rejem igir	chicken leg - see **[Food]**
rist	land-use rights
saytan	type of spirit - see **[Spirits]**
säratäña	house maid
shamma	large handmade cloth, worn draped around upper body
shay	tea
shïmbra	chickpeas
shïro	a spicy chickpea paste
silet	promise

sïnde	wheat
tabot	replica of the Ark of the Covenant, found inside all Ethiopian Orthodox churches
tälla	local beer
teff	Eragrostis tef, used to make *injera*
t'enqway	witch - see **[Spirits]**
teterma	chicken colour - red and white
tist	type of spirit - see **[Spirits]**
t'qur	black
tsebel	holy water
tunjit	type of plant, used dried for its scent
wetete	disease affecting cattle
wonfit	sieve
woreda	district
wot	spicy stew
wuqabi	type of spirit - see **[Spirits]**
wusha	dog
yebet	domestic 'of the house'
yebet imäbet	house wife
yedur	wild
Zagol	cowrie shell
zar	type of spirit - see **[Spirits]**, also spelt '*sar*'
zemed	close family



Introduction

This research, 'Women and Chicken Husbandry in Ethiopia', forms part of the AHRC-funded research project, 'Cultural and Scientific Perceptions of Human-Chicken Interactions[2]'. The poultry industry is a fast-growing one, and is predicted to be the most-consumed meat worldwide by 2030 (FAO, 2003). Chickens are so ubiquitous that they have been suggested to define the 'Anthropocene'[3] (Carrington, 2016). Poultry is also high on the development agenda, as a cheap, low-input source of

[2] http://www.scicultchickens.org/about

[3] The term 'Anthropocene' is a popular scientific term, first coined by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2000 (Global Change Newsletter 14:17-18) to denote the current geological epoch, in which human activities impact the earth and atmosphere on a global scale. Beginning c.1800 CE., it includes changes to: erosion and sediment transport; the chemical composition of the atmosphere, oceans and soils, and the environmental conditions caused by these changes, including global warming, and ocean acification; changes to the biosphere on land and in the sea, as a result of habitant loss, species invasion and the physical and chemical changes above. It is not a formally defined unit, but the 'Anthropocene' Working Group is developing a proposal for consideration by the International Commission on Statigraphy (see: http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/workinggroups/anthropocene/)

protein or cash income, and as a means of female empowerment (R. G. Alders & Pym, 2009; Guèye, 2002; Mack, Hoffmann, & Otte, 2005). However, chickens have a richer history of interaction with humans than simply as sources of food, as Haraway says: "Follow the chicken and find the world" (2007, p. 274). Archaeological evidence suggests that chickens were domesticated from the red junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*) at more than one site in Asia, and although the date has been disputed, this may have occurred as early as 8000BCE. From there the domestic chicken spread via Oceania to South America, and across Europe, possibly via commercial roads through the Near and Middle East (Pitt, Gillingham, Maltby, & Stewart, 2016). Although now the focus on poultry is as a source of meat, it is thought that early adoption was for other uses, including cockfighting, feathers, noise and ritual or cosmological uses (Sykes, 2012).

Poultry production is strongly associated with 'women's work' in the household. As part of the project we wanted a study of women keeping chickens in a 'traditional' backyard system, in a place where chickens form both part of the household economic and nutritional strategy, but also still have a place in ritual activity. Ethiopia was chosen as an interesting place to study these relationships between members of the household and chickens, due to a high level of indigenous chicken production (Alemu, Degefe, Ferede, Nzietcheung, & Roy, 2008), and an ongoing role for chickens in matters of social relations and religion (Aklilu, Almekinders, Udo, & Van Der Zijpp, 2007; Dessie & Ogle, 2001). Anthropological approaches to animals in Africa have tended to focus on wild or large domestic animals, such as cattle, despite the important role that smaller domestic species play in everyday life and religious activities (Shanklin, 1985). This focus also often means a focus on the social world of

men, whilst women's lives are described briefly in relation to their activities in the house, or participation in social activities dominated by men.

There has been growing interest in domestic and industrial species, and their roles in networks of producers and consumers, as well as entities in themselves. My research aims to uncover the role of the chicken in the Amhara region of the northern highlands of Ethiopia, in the household and wider society. While agricultural studies have been conducted into poultry production and marketing (Aklilu et al., 2007; Meseret, 2010), these have highlighted the difficulty in accessing women's knowledge. During a year's fieldwork, I used surveys, informal interviews and participant observation, to focus on collecting this hidden knowledge. This allowed me to explore the role of chickens beyond their economic use, such as their role in mediating relationships with the spirits that populate the landscape in Amhara. While interesting for its contribution to the field of multi-species anthropology, the study is also timely in the local Ethiopian context. The cultural uses for chickens determine local preferences, and may be a source of resistance to improved chicken breeds, that have been introduced in Ethiopia since the 1950s. As the government continues to be interested in using chickens as an empowerment tool, and in expanding the poultry sector (Alemu et al., 2008), it can also contribute to our understanding of how this can be done in a culturally relevant way.

Chickens in Africa

The timing of, and purpose, of introduction of chickens into Africa remains unclear (Mwacharo, Bjørnstad, Han, & Hanotte, 2013). The earliest archaeological remains date to the third millennium BCE (Chami, 2007), although these dates have been

questioned due to the difficulty of distinguishing the chicken from other local galliforms, such as guinea fowl (MacDonald, 1992). There is evidence for poultry in Egypt and Sudan around 2000 BCE (Mwacharo, Bjørnstad, et al., 2013) and in West Africa before 850 AD (MacDonald, 1992). Multiple introductions are likely to have occurred, along the East Africa coast, overland via the Horn of Africa, and via trading routes into West Africa and North Africa (Gifford-Gonzalez & Hanotte, 2011; Mwacharo, Bjørnstad, et al., 2013). Mitochondrial DNA studies in East Africa suggest separate introductions of poultry populations, and while there is moderate exchange between populations in Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, chickens in Ethiopia have remained isolated (Mwacharo, Nomura, et al., 2013), in line with Ethiopia's social and political history.

The use of chickens in historical sites spreading out from Asia suggests that the primary use was not for consumption, but for their sound and feathers, or for cockfighting and ritual sacrifice (Brothwell, 1997; Shi, 2015; Sykes, 2012). There has been less work in the African context, although linguistic studies, and the presence of chickens in ethnographic records for ritual, divination and sacrifice (rather than for cock-fighting or consumption) demonstrate the importance of poultry in different African cultures (Williamson, 2000). Fighting breeds were introduced to the East Africa coast from South East Asia (Blench, 2007). The role of poultry in magico-religious contexts has been well-reported [e.g. Cote d'Ivoire (Hellweg, 2009), Ghana (Insoll, 2010), Zambia (Turner, 1975)]. However, in accounts of African livestock, chickens often get little mention. While he describes chickens as 'ubiquitous' in Central Africa, Denbow grants them only a paragraph (2013). They are given even shorter shrift by Hoben, who only has this to say about them: 'chickens, cats, dogs,

and bees are also kept by most households although they are of minor importance' (1973, p. 52).

More recently, chickens have gained increased visibility in the development and agricultural literature, as an accessible tool of poverty alleviation. It has been estimated that more than 80% of the global poultry population occurs in traditional family-based production systems (Mack et al., 2005)**.** Poultry has been recognised as an essential strategy of poor households as they are kept in a low-input system that is able to act as a source of protein or cash income, poverty buffer and the first rung on the 'livestock ladder' (Alders, Spradbrow, & Young, 2009; Guèye, 2005). Whilst the idea of the 'livestock ladder', the process by which traditional livestock keepers could increase production, and use livestock as a pathway out of poverty has been described as a "myth", with "rungs at the bottom and top only, with a yawning, generally insurmountable void between the two" (Dijkman, 2009, p. 2), the importance of those bottom rungs to poor households should not be underestimated.

It has been argued that the previous emphasis in the development and agricultural research on larger, more expensive, livestock was biased towards those who were not among the poorest (Dolberg, 2007). In contrast, chickens are cheap, require little investment, and can be kept around the home, and thus can be managed by small children, the old, and disabled family members (Aklilu, Udo, Almekinders, & Van der Zijpp, 2008). Poultry has been suggested as an important tool in addressing low protein consumption, both through direct consumption of meat and eggs (Copland & Alders, 2009), and as a route out of poverty, allowing people to afford to eat meat

more regularly (Jensen & Dolberg, 2003; Kristjanson, Krishna, Radeny, & Nindo, 2004). Eggs in particular are both a balanced source of essential amino acids, and can be stored in hot climates under local conditions more easily than most foods of animal origin (Melesse, Worku, & Teklegiorgis, 2013). In addition, poultry plays an important role in the context of many social, cultural and religious activities (Aklilu et al., 2007; Guèye, 2005).

Although 'improved' breeds, those bred for higher meat or egg production, and other industrially preferred characteristics, were introduced to Africa as early as the 1920s (Kitalyi, 1998), more comprehensive interventions did not take place until much later. During the 1980s, the Bangladesh Poultry Development Model was developed for semi-scavenging poultry production, based around women's groups, and attempts were made to reproduce this system in other countries (Mack et al., 2005). During this period, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) started to develop Newcastle disease (ND) vaccine and delivery programmes, focusing on village chickens. In 2001, the FAO and DFID launched the Pro-Poor Livestock Policy Initiative, which aimed to take a new approach to technology-oriented projects, and instead bring together stakeholders to create more sustainable impact (DFID, 2008). A number of NGOS offer direct poultry-based interventions, including World Vision[4] and Oxfam[5]. Most recently, the Gates Foundation have partnered with Heifer International to donate chickens to women

[4] http://donate.worldvision.org/2-chickens

[5] http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/oxfam-unwrapped/animal-lovers/chickens-ou9003ml

in West Africa, and raise awareness of the potential of poultry as a development tool[6].

Forms of poultry production

Poultry management systems are usually described as 'extensive' village or backyard poultry, or 'intensive' commercial production systems. Village chickens require minimal inputs for labour, food, or housing, are well-adapted to local conditions, but have low productivity. By contrast, commercial chickens balance high productivity with considerable inputs for labour, food, nutrition, and veterinary care (Alders & Pym, 2009).

Village chicken systems, the main focus of this study, can also be referred to as backyard poultry, as this system of care may be found in peri-urban (the space where urban and rural meet) and urban households (Guèye, 2002). In this system of care, a small flock are raised in backyard, usually between 5 and 20 per household (Guèye, 1998), although the numbers vary considerably between countries – for example, in Nigeria Sonaiya described 'backyard' poultry flocks as being between 1-20 chickens, and 'small-scale intensive' flocks of 10-50 chickens (2009). However, in Malawi, Gondwe and Wollny describe backyard poultry flock sizes up to 60 chickens, more than the small-scale intensive flocks in Nigeria (2007). The majority of their diet is scavenged, although they may be supplemented with local available feeds, grains, or

[6] Followers of Bill Gates' personal blog, https://www.gatesnotes.com/Development/Why-I-Would-Raise-Chickens, were invited to take part in a number of informative tasks, on the completion of which, the Foundation donated a chicken. "These chickens are multiplying on an ongoing basis, so there is no investment that has a return percentage anything like being able to breed chickens," Gates says. "It's like the classic thing of teaching somebody how to fish. If you don't live near water then it's pretty hard to fish. But the parable could have been stated in terms of giving somebody a chicken and showing them how to raise chickens."

kitchen waste, depending on availability of these resources. Poultry may be kept in simple structures, with other livestock, or commonly inside the house or outside. Replacement stock is usually produced within a household, but if needed, may be bought from neighbours or traders. Chickens are sold infrequently, as the need arises, for household goods. Using the terminology 'family poultry' Guèye suggests that free-range or traditional systems, and backyard or subsistence systems, are different forms of family poultry husbandry, dependent on availability of resources and inputs, but that these systems overlap (2002). As a result, I use the term 'village poultry' to describe small flocks that are kept as part of a household, on a small scale. This traditional system of production is reported to be similar in a variety of rural households [e.g. Vietnam (Burgos, Hong Hanh, & Burgos, 2007), South Africa (Mtileni, Muchadeyi, Maiwashe, Phitsane, & Halimani, 2009), and Central America, although there the picture is more complex due to the presence of wild and farmed turkeys and other fowl (Mallia, 1999)]. These forms of poultry production remain the focus of development interventions (Alders et al., 2009; Mack et al., 2005; Sodjinou, 2011).

There is growing interest in commercial poultry production, to meet urban and international demand. Large poultry producers are found mainly in peri-urban areas, as they require good access to the markets, for both selling and buying inputs (Copland & Alders, 2009; Kryger, Thomsen, Whyte, & Dissing, 2010). There has also been considerable interest in semi-intensive farms, which manage commercial breeds, but with lower access to capital and inputs, and on a smaller scale (Mcleod, Thieme, & Mack, 2009; Vincent, Langat B. K., Rop, & Kipsat M.J., 2011). While in some contexts these have benefitted the economy, they remain of considerable concern

for their ability to manage biosecurity risks, in particular Avian Influenza (Fasina, Ali, Yilma, Thieme, & Ankers, 2012; Pagani & Wossene, 2008).

Gender and work

An important theme in the discourse on poultry and development is that of gender. The care of poultry is primarily associated with women, as chickens in the village system are usually kept in the house or backyard, and thus often fall within the sphere of 'women's work' (Alders & Pym, 2009; Guèye, 2005). In West Kenya Okitoi and colleagues found that women mostly owned, cared for, and made decisions over the use of the poultry (2007). In Uganda, women are the main source of labour for livestock management, but may only own a few small livestock (Oluka, Owoyesigire, Esenu, & Sssewannyana, 2006). However, the association between women and poultry management is not universal, for example where women are prohibited from eating chicken meat or eggs (Guèye, 2003). In a study in Borno state, Nigeria, men were the primary owners of poultry, which has been suggested to be due to the dominant role of the husband in the household (Abubakar, Ambali, & Tamjdo, 2007). Men have also been found to take greater interest in poultry when relative benefits increase, for example, loss of other sources of income, development interventions that promote poultry, and increasing scale of production (Aklilu et al., 2007; Amos, 2006; Hovorka, 2008).

The context of the research: Ethiopia

Ethiopia ranks 173 of 187 listed in the UNDP Human Development Index, a measure of three aspects of human development; 'a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable, and having a decent standard of living' (UNDP, 2014b), and nearly

90% of the population qualify for the UNDP measure of multidimensional poverty (UNDP, 2014a). It receives the fourth largest amount of overseas development assistance, behind Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Vietnam (OECD, 2013). While it contributes to 50% of the country's economy, agriculture employs the 85% of the population (CIA, 2016). As such, it has been a significant area for investment and development.

The infrastructure of Ethiopia limits tools of development. Less than 20% of the roads are paved (CIA, 2016), and the government has recognised the need for investment, with the support of the World Bank, EU and the African Development Bank. Chinese investment in infrastructure and construction has been considerable (Gamora, 2010), to the extent that shouts of '*ferenji*' ('foreigner') are often interchangeable with '*China*'. The only railway, the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railroad, is largely unusable, running only from Dire Dawa to the coast. Ethiopia has one of the lowest electrification rates, estimated at lower than 16% of the population having any access to electricity (Bekele & Tadesse, 2012; Maurer & Nonay, 2009). Power outages are common, even in Addis Ababa. Although the government stated an interest in ICT-led development (Hartley & Murphree, 2006), it has been criticised for using the state monopoly to keep an eye on districts (Gagliardone, 2014). Mobile phones are growing more common, but internet penetration remains low (Gagliardone, 2014), with expensive rates for connectivity (Hafkin, 2006). However, with cheap Chinese imported smartphones, free wi-fi in many restaurants and hotel lobby bars in the city, and mobile internet coverage extending well into the countryside, many people that I came into contact with used Facebook, particularly to circulate religious messages, or memes that blended aspects of Western and Ethiopian culture.

Agriculture and the Ethiopian economy

The dramatic differences in the topography of Ethiopia mean that ecology varies between desert steppe, to savannah, to deciduous and evergreen woodland. This, coupled with the countries recent political history, have had an impact on the use of land in Ethiopia. It has one of the lowest global urban populations, at 17%, although the city of Addis Ababa has a population of around 3 million (CIA, 2016). The area under cultivation is a small share of the total area of Ethiopia, due to the unsuitability of the most of the land. However, the landscape is usually divided into altitude zones that correlate to crop production.

The highlands generally refer to the areas that lie between 1500 and 3000 masl, which are further subdivided into the 'weyna dega' (1500-2000m) and the 'dega' (2000-3000m). The highlands are usually considered the best areas for both crops and livestock, and have had lower levels of malaria than the rest of the country (Baume, Reithinger, & Woldehanna, 2009; Graves et al., 2009), although as global warming continues, it is thought that there will be an increase in the altitude of malaria distribution (Siraj et al., 2014). The lowland 'qolla' is any area below 1500m, and in the agro-pastoral zones here people may grow maize and sorghum. Above the highlands, is the 'wirch', the high altitude zones. At more than 3000masl, this area is susceptible to frost, and here people may grow barley, wheat and some kinds of beans (Pankhurst, 1992).

Of the land that is suitable, about three quarters are planted with cereal, and most of the remaining land is planted with pulses and oilseeds (Taffesse, Dorosh, & Sinafikeh, 2012). Coffee occupies a very small area (less than 3% of the area

cultivated), and *chat*, a stimulant also known as *qat* or *khat*, is cultivated on only 1.35% of the land (Taffesse et al., 2012). Coffee is the major export crop, and the rest of the agricultural export market comes from cotton, cut flowers, and livestock and products (cattle, sheep, goats) (CIA, 2016). Chat has become a more significant cash crop in Ethiopia, due to improved market access, growing demand, low inputs involved in growing it, and fluctuating coffee prices (Feyisa & Aune, 2003; Klein, Beckerleg, & Hailu, 2009). This change has also taken place around the study area, Bahir Dar, to meet growing demand from Addis Ababa (Anderson, 2007), especially in the irrigated areas close to Lake Tana. Although coffee remains the most significant export crop, teff (*Eragrostis tef*) is the most important crop grown in Ethiopia, making up 20% of the cultivated area (the next popular is maize, covering 15% of cultivated areas). It is used to make *injera*, the flatbread that is the main national dish of Ethiopia, and its straw is used for animal feed and mixed with mud for building. Although there has been a ban in place on its export, it comprises an important part of farmers income, as its low yield and high demand for consumption in urban areas generate greater prices than other cereals (Minten, Tamru, Engida, & Kuma, 2013). It has growing international recognition as a 'supergrain', and in 2015 the government suggested they may lift the 2006 ban on export of teff grains and flour (Jeffrey, 2015). People would often complain that the international demand for it, driven by celebrity diet fads, had pushed up the prices for Ethiopian consumers, although the farmers did not see the benefit of this increased price.

Statistics for agricultural trade in 2011 (most recent data available) show that the top 5 exports by value were: green coffee, sesame seeds, fresh vegetables, dried beans, and goat meat. Within the top 20 were other pulses, grains, spices and sheep and

cattle meat. Despite the large areas under cultivation for cereals, the biggest import by value for the same year was wheat, followed by palm oil, raw sugar, dried peas, and maize flour. Other major imports were a number of different oil types, flours of other cereals, and refined sugar (FAO, 2016), and this is reflected in the high price and difficulty of access to these goods. While bottles and tins of olive oil could be found for a high price in the supermarkets of the city, farmers would gather once a month along the main road in Anestenya Wenz with old empty 'highlands' (plastic water bottles, named after one of the brands), or small yellow jerry cans, and receive their allocation from traders from the city.

Ethiopia is thought to have the largest livestock population in Africa (CSA, 2015). Livestock contributes a considerable portion to the economy - in 2011, goat, sheep and cattle meat were significant exports, with a value of approximately $75m, however the estimated production of these meats from indigenous animals was approximately $1.5billion (FAO, 2016). Livestock products including milk, cheese and butter, contribute to the nutritional status of the people – it is estimated that animals sustain 80% of the rural population of Ethiopia (Alemu et al., 2008). By-products, such as hides and manure (used as fertiliser and fuel), also have an important role. In addition, live animals, have use for draught or transport, and provide some security as capital stock (CSA, 2015).

There have been considerable attempts to introduce improved breeds of livestock, however, the majority of the livestock population within Ethiopia are indigenous breeds (CSA, 2015). The primary uses of cattle are milk, draught, beef and breeding, of sheep breeding, mutton and wool, and of goats, for breeding, milk and meat (CSA,

2015). The main draught animals are donkeys (at 7 million), with a smaller number of horses and mules. There are approximately 1 million camels, used for meat and milk as well as draught and transportation, although they are mainly found in the pastoral regions of Afar and Somalia (CSA, 2015). The region of study, Amhara, has a significant proportion of the livestock, with between 20 and 40 % of all except camels. It also has about 20% of the total number of beehives in the country – the majority of these are built in the traditional fashion (CSA, 2015) although there have been a number of interventions introducing intermediate or modern beehives (Tegegne, Gebremedhin, & Hoekstra, 2006), more suitable for women, including a joint program between Oxfam GB and Ambrosia to set up a training school for beekeepers in Mecha (Anand & Sisay, 2011).

The government is investing in agricultural development

The agricultural sector in Ethiopia faces many challenges – El Niño events (Comenetz & Caviedes, 2002), land fragmentation (Adenew & Abdi, 2005), and population pressure (Hurni, Tato, & Zeleke, 2005) have contributed to the environmental threats of deforestation (Reusing, 2000), overgrazing (Tegegne, Mengistie, Desalew, Teka, & Dejen, 2009), and soil erosion (Taffesse et al., 2012), particularly in the highlands. Lowland pastoralists are also growing increasingly marginalised due to resettlement of agricultural groups, and agricultural development projects in the best watered areas (Pankhurst & Piguet, 2004). In the year that I was in the field, drought had a major impact on food security (UN, 2016).

There has been a government push to diversify into manufacturing, textiles and energy generation, such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, a hydro-electric project on the Blue Nile, which along with others, have caused conflict within Ethiopia and with Egypt and Sudan (Eguavoen & Tesfai, 2012). However, improving rural livelihoods is a major focus of both national and international efforts. Ethiopia is one of the most significant receivers of aid in the world (World Bank, 2014a), and the World Bank alone lists $15 billion in commitments funding 177 projects, of which a quarter are in rural services (World Bank, 2014b) There are a wide range of interventions run by both national and international organisations, encompassing areas as broad as tree growing (Mekonnen, 2009), micro-enterprise (Mulualem, 2004), animal health, and other extension activities, such as birth attendants, and roofwater harvesting (Tsegaye & Haile, 2004).

A number of issues in crop production in Ethiopia have been identified, including low levels of use of inputs (such as fertiliser, pesticide and improved seeds), low levels of irrigation, soil degradation and erosion, insufficient agricultural research and extension, and constraints to market development (Taffesse et al., 2012). While the government of Ethiopia has introduced a number of reforms aiming to boost agricultural production, there are concerns that these have not generated the desired impacts (Berhanu & Poulton, 2014; Spielman, 2008). A number of reasons have been suggested for these including insufficient capacity of distributors, poor seed quality and timing of delivery, cost, unavailability of preferred traits or varieties, availability of rural credit and the hierarchical nature of the delivery of such services (Spielman, 2008).

It has been argued that livestock policy had not received sufficient attention in government strategy (Halderman, 2004). While it is an important part of the modern rural development strategy, attempts to modernise and improve livestock care have not been taken up – approximately 80% of livestock owners feed using grazing, crops residue or hay, and only 1% provide improved feeds. The low rate of adoption may again be a result of the limited reach of extension packages. During the year 2014/15, less than 1% of the total households in the Agricultural Sample Survey were involved in livestock extension packages, the majority of these being one of the available beef, poultry and dairy development packages (CSA, 2015), and only around 5% of households participating in more than one package. Large livestock continues to decline; in the area of study, the Amhara region, there has been a decline of the cattle population, due to reduced availability of grazing land, a decline in milk production, and a lack of opportunities in marketing and milk preservation. However, farmers have moved towards smaller livestock, such as sheep and goats, as they require a smaller area for rearing, can be herded by women and children, provide a source of quick cash, and due to a demand for mutton for consumption by restaurants and individuals in Bahir Dar town and surroundings (Ali & Neka, 2012). Sheep and goats possess similar characteristics to those identified for the potential benefits of poultry, which suggests that chickens promise a suitable intervention strategy.

Poultry in Ethiopia

Poultry has been described in Ethiopia as “The first and the last resource a poor household owns” (Aklilu et al., 2008, p. 117), meaning both the first step on the livestock ladder, and the only capital that a household has left when it declines into

poverty. As studies in other regions have shown, poultry in Ethiopia is often seen as the first step in animal-rearing activities, allowing people to exchange them for larger animals (Aklilu et al., 2008). There are estimated to be more than 50 million chickens in Ethiopia (CSA, 2015), approximately one third of these are chicks, another third laying hens, and the remainder made up by cockerels, pullets and non-laying hens. Poultry has been proposed as a more flexible source of livestock benefits, including meat, eggs, and acting as a source of savings. However, Ethiopia has a very low rate of protein consumption – in 2014, per capita rates of consumption for all meats was only 4kg, 0.5kg of which was poultry, the lowest recorded poultry consumption in the world, and one of the lowest for all meat – for example, neighbouring Sudan recorded an average of 17.9kg of meat consumption per capita (OECD, 2016).

The poultry sector in Ethiopia has been characterised as systems of 'village', small scale or commercial poultry production. The village, or 'backyard' system is thought to contribute 99% of the national poultry meat production, and is characterised by low input and high levels of mortality. In Ethiopia, small-scale production usually consists of between 50 to 500 chickens, of the 'improved' type, and are based around towns. Large scale commercial production usually involves 10,000 or more exotic birds, with a high-input management system – currently the largest producers in Ethiopia are ELFORA, Alema and Genesis farms, which are located in Debre Zeit, near Addis Ababa (Alemu et al., 2008).

The terminology 'local' and 'exotic' emerges from both the literature on poultry in Ethiopia, and local ways of talking about them, as '*habesha'* (Ethiopian) and '*ferenji*' (foreign). Although chickens are not native to Africa, chickens have been present in

most places for long enough to be well-adapted to local conditions and tastes (Desta et al., 2013). As such, the term 'local chickens' is used in the literature to describe these chickens that can be kept in the free-range scavenging system, although there may not be any specific breed characteristics [e.g Malawi (T. N. Gondwe & Wollny, 2007), Ethiopia (Moges, Mellesse, & Mellesse, 2010), Zimbabwe (Muchadeyi et al., 2007)], although others have chosen to use the term 'indigenous' (Dana, Dessie, van der Waaij, & van Arendonk, 2010; Halima, Neser, Van Marle-Koster, & De Kock, 2007). In contrast, the term 'exotic' chickens refers to 'improved breeds' which have been introduced since the mid-twentieth century, as part of programmes of poultry improvement, often White Leghorn, and Rhode Island Red (Moges, Tegegne, & Dessie, 2010; Wondmeneh, van Der Waaij, Tadelle, Udo, & van Arendonk, 2015).

Poultry does not play a significant role in imports and exports of meat products (Alemu et al., 2008), due to a local preference for keeping indigenous chickens, and the still small industrial poultry sector (Pagani & Wossene, 2008). This is in contrast other countries in Africa, where there has been an increase in imports of poultry for consumption in urban and tourist areas, impacting local production, for example in Senegal (Sharma, Nyange, Duteutre, & Morgan, 2005), Ghana (Banson, Muthusamy, & Kondo, 2015), and South Africa, where it has led to an increase on import duties on poultry products (Fourie, 2013). In Ethiopia, while modern intensive production methods and new breeds have changed poultry production in recent decades, the high demands on maintaining proper health, hygiene and management means that these changes have not had a significant effect on village poultry production (Mack et al., 2005).

Chickens and development in Ethiopia

Introduction of improved breeds is just one way in which poultry has been used as a means of poverty alleviation. Others include microfinance for small-scale poultry enterprises, and approaches to increase productivity, including provision of veterinary support, development of Newcastle Disease vaccine and delivery programmes, information exchange and training (Mack et al., 2005; Riise, Permin, & Kryger, 2005). In some African countries this has led to increased government interest and investment in the sector, such as in Botswana (Hovorka, 2008), and South Africa (Bernstein, 2013).

In Ethiopia, there has also been considerable interest in poultry from the government and donor agencies. Research and extension started in the 1950s, with distribution of exotic breeds to farmers and small-scale commercial poultry producers. Today, poultry technology is part of the extension programs of regional agricultural bureaus, which promotes and distributes exotic breeds, with some advice on feeding, watering, housing and disease control (Teklewold, Dadi, Yami, & Dana, 2006). Poultry form a significant part of the 'women's development package' delivered as part of the extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Cohen & Lemma, 2014), and forms part of other, women-focussed, NGO-led programmes (Woldegies, 2014). Despite this long history of introduction of improved breeds, the most recent statistics suggest exotic and hybrid birds together make up less than 5% of the national poultry flock (CSA, 2015), and the majority of exotic poultry is kept in intensive, large-scale commercial poultry production farms (Alemu et al., 2008).

Barriers to development: Chickens and social networks

With so much investment from different quarters, what has been the barrier to the uptake of these new breeds? A number of issues have been identified in both the extensive and intensive poultry sector of Ethiopia, including marketing (Aklilu et al., 2007), absence of immunisation programs (Dana, van der Waaij, Dessie, & van Arendonk, 2010), lack of credit and extension services (Teklewold et al., 2006) and biosecurity, both of current diseases and regarding potential threats of avian flu (Alemu et al., 2008; Bush, 2006). In addition, as with other approaches to increasing agricultural productivity in rural areas, failure to take the context of production into account can lead to resistance by farmers who are acting within local practical and social constraints (Van Damme, Ansoms, and Baret, 2013). In the case of village chickens in Ethiopia, studies carried out by agricultural science researchers often mentioned preferences for colour (Dessie and Ogle, 2001, 532), uses other than culinary or sale (Aklilu et al., 2008, 178), and barriers to improvement other than technical (Aklilu et al., 2007, 166), offering attempts to characterise the context of production beyond the economic and technological realm. As Maia Green shows in her work on introduced breeds of cows in Tanzania, 'improved livestock are not technological objects which can be easily inserted into the farming systems, livelihoods and lifestyles of smallholder farmers', but animals which are lived with and affect relations 'between people within and outside the household, between commodities and markets and between people and animals' (unpublished).

The Amharic idiom of the title, 'Chickens dream only of crops', refers to the lack of vision of the chicken, concerned only with achieving its next meal. We can also be like

this chicken, thinking only of the purpose of poultry as economic tools with roles in production and development. As the work of Green suggests, animals are not purely tools or objects, but parts of a network of relationships. This shift towards seeing animals as entities 'to live with', not just 'good to think' or 'good to eat' (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010), has gained popularity in the field of multispecies ethnography.

Traditionally animals in ethnography have been large or wild animals, such as the pangolin (Douglas, 1963), cassowary (Bulmer, 1967) and cattle (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). Cattle in particular have been of major interest to anthropologists in Africa. Herskovits first described the 'cattle complex' in East Africa, stretching from Sudan to South Africa, but skirting around the edges of Ethiopia (1926). In the societies in this region, cattle played an important role in birth, death, marriage, as a form of wealth, measure of power, prestige and status, and were the proper animals for feasts and ceremonies. Studies from these regions describe an important role of cattle in society, for example Galaty describes how cattle are considered to "know people and think about them" (2014, p. 35). Evans-Pritchard says about the Nuer and their cattle: "cattle and men sustain life by their reciprocal services to one another. In this intimate symbiotic relationship men and beasts form a single community of the closest kind." (1940, p. 36). The emphasis is often on the relationship and parallels between the worlds of cattle and men. Even where women are not prohibited from owning or caring for cattle, they are infrequently mentioned. For example, in Schneider's description of the subsistence role of cattle in the Pakot of Kenya, women appear only briefly in reference to their exclusion from feasts,bridewealth, and their domain of crops (1957). In her work in Botswana, Hovorka directly addresses how men are linked to high-status cattle, and women to low-status chickens, which

‘garner much less attention, wield little status and power, and feature in low-valued domestic subsistence or impersonal industrial agriculture realms’ (2012, p. 875).

Shanklin notes that despite chickens being numerically the largest group of domesticated animals in the world, there is a disproportionate emphasis in anthropological literature on larger animals (1985). The focus of many newer works are on small domestic or industrial species, such as silkworms (Kasi, 2010), microbes in cheese making (Paxson, 2008), or maggots in clinical treatments (Andrews, *unpublished*). Chickens have also become an increasing focus, such as in networks of processing, marketing and consumption in industrial production (Hamilton & McCabe, 2016; Striffler, 2005) and the materiality of hen-keeping as hobby in the UK (Bettany & Kerrane, 2011). These papers offer alternative ways of thinking about our relationships with non-human living things, and how these affect, or are affected by, our cultural, economic or political worlds. For example, Striffler’s book ‘Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favourite Food’ looks at how forms of farming and consumption have changed over time, and how the poultry processing industry has come to be linked with undocumented workers (2005).

We cannot completely remove the human perspective from animals, especially not in the case of domestic species, who have adapted to fit us, and, it is also argued, have changed us in turn (Cassidy, 2007; Leach, 2007). Some would argue that attention should not be placed on separate human and animal lives, but on the shared lives, and how we cooperate and change each other (Lestel et al., 2006). To get closer to the animal, we can turn to disciplines such as zoology and ethology which study animals themselves (Marvin, 2010, 125). Ethnographic methods allow us

to describe relationships that are not theoretical or speculative, but based on observed experiences (Smart, 2014). In the case of this research, the experts on the chickens were those who formed relationships with them, by living in the same quarters, and interacting with them every day. Part of the findings of this thesis will concern management, sale and consumption of chickens and their products. However, the role of 'the chicken' as direct participants in, or wider reflections on, relationships within and between households, religion and society also emerged as important.

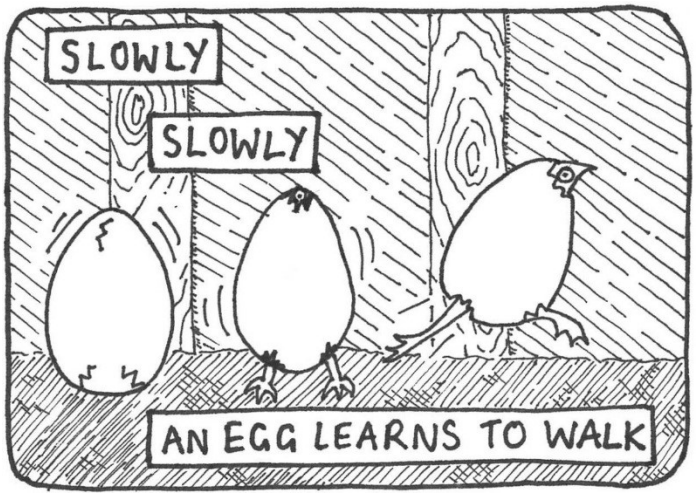
Chapter summaries

Having established the wider context of this study, the next chapter, **[Into the Field]**, introduces the field sites, and some of the political and social context in Ethiopia that was relevant to the work, and methods used to collect data for this research.

In **[Extensive]** I begin by describing the role of chickens as economic tools in extensive (village) production. Although systems of extensive chicken keeping are well described, some authors have identified a gap in understanding of women's hidden roles, despite their having the main responsibility for chickens (Aklilu et al., 2007; Dessie & Ogle, 2001; Guèye, 2005). Once the context of chicken production in the area of rural Ethiopia in which my study was carried out has been established, I consider the role of the chickens in different relationships. The first of these, **[House]** looks at the chicken within the household, and how relationships between chickens and humans may be reflected in each other. The second **[Spirits]** explores the role of chickens in maintaining good relationships with the spiritual realm. The third of these,

[Food], looks at chickens as a food which can be used to maintain groups, or construct social identities.

Considering the role of chickens in empowering women, in the final ethnographic chapter I describe the management of chickens in intensive (small scale commercial) production, and the challenges faced by both male and female producers. In the final chapter, I reflect on how these relationships are changing, in a changing social and economic context.



Into the field

To develop the themes raised from the existing literature on chickens, I needed a field site in Ethiopia, with high rates of poultry ownership, and close to an urban centre, in order to observe market interactions. This was found with support from researchers from Liverpool Veterinary School, who were working with the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) on Newcastle disease (ND), an avian disease that has devastating impacts on local flocks. Alex and Tadiose, members of the EIAR based at the research site in Debre Zeit and the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, were my initial contacts before I entered the field, and assisted in the selection of a research site, as well as enabling me to get the necessary permissions to carry out this work.

I spent one year in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, based in a village 'Anestenya Wenz', close to the city of Bahir Dar. Where possible, I tried to find local written sources of information, which may not have been published internationally, such as those held at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, in Addis Ababa, and the collection at Bahir Dar University. Primary data was collected through surveys, informal interviews and observation. Where I was invited, I attended religious occasions and weddings, drank coffee and shared meals, shared my seat on public transport with crying babies and squawking chickens, and bought my groceries in the local markets. This chapter details the process of choosing an appropriate field site, and how research interests were developed and explored.

Initial Selection of Field Site

The first criteria for a research site was defined as 'areas in which households keep chickens using traditional methods'. The map below shows the density of poultry populations across Ethiopia, and within the Amhara region between 65-85% of all households have poultry (Pagani & Wossene, 2008).

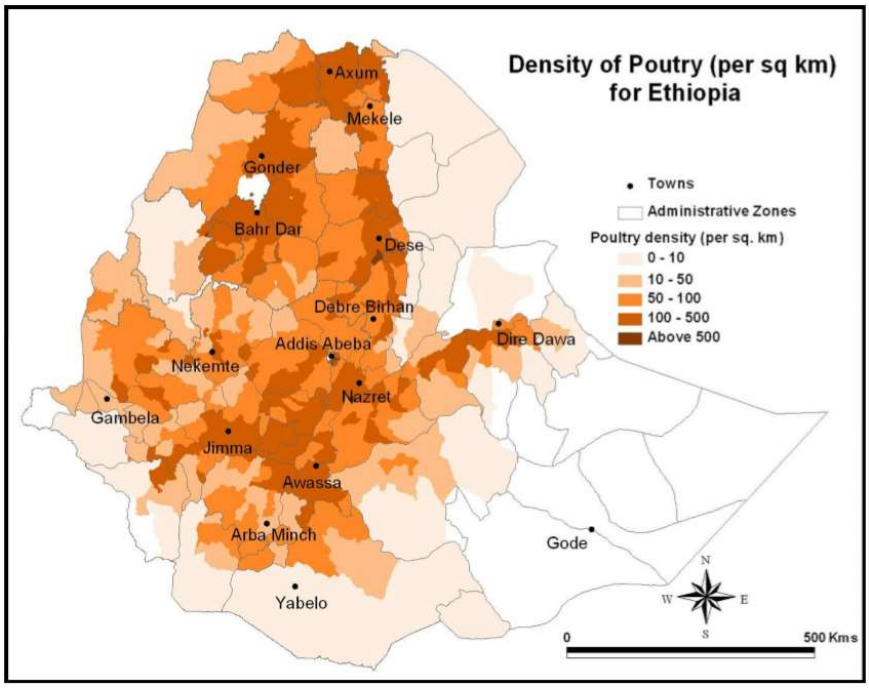


Figure 1. Density of poultry in Ethiopia (Alemu et al., 2008)

Other studies have identified the movement of livestock from rural to urban centres, with those close to urban centres often trading directly with urban households (Aklilu et al., 2007). This highlighted the importance of being within a reasonable distance of an urban centre of observe these market interactions. The city of Bahir Dar, the state capital of Amhara, was identified as being a good choice for this. Five towns close to the northern city of Bahir Dar were identified by Alex and Tadiose as meeting this criteria, and we agreed that we would visit these places together on my arrival in Ethiopia.

The research context

In order to place the region of study into context, the complex politics and recent history of Ethiopia needs to be briefly discussed – in particular, the 'Amhara' region and people, in a modern Ethiopia in which Amharic, the official national language of

Ethiopia, is the mother tongue of only 30% of the population (CSA, 2007a). Modern Ethiopia is made of regions that hold around 80 different ethnic groups and languages, of which the Oromo comprise the largest ethnic group (about 35%) (CSA, 2007a). However, histories of the country have tended to focus on the Judeo-Christian political elites of the northern Amhara and Tigray regions (Levine, 1974), the so-called 'Great Tradition'. Writing in the 1960s, Weissleder said "The Ethiopian Empire is - - in every possible meaning of the phrase - - the empire of the Amhara people. It was founded by them, organised by them, expanded by them, and is now controlled by them in all political and cultural essentials" (1965, p. 1).

Subsequent events, including the deposition of Emperor Haile Selassie by the military council, known as the Derg, called into question similar statements of ethnographies of the Amhara region at the time[7], and criticised them for creating a narrative of continuity, and thus legitimacy to those in power (Clapham, 2002; Hagmann, 2006; Toggia, 2008). Levine himself, in the preface to the new edition of the classic text 'Greater Ethiopia', acknowledges that the publication of the original book, painting Ethiopia as a sustainable multi-ethnic society, on the same date that Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed, was awkward (2000). Even the boundaries of what constitutes 'Ethiopia' varies within these historical texts, from at the peak of the empire areas that were subsequently incorporated into Somalia, Djibouti, and Sudan, or divided

[7] E.g. DN Levine (1965) Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture, Wolfgang Weissleder (1965) The Political Ecology of Amhara Domination, Allan Hoben (1973) Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia: The Dynamics of Cognatic Descent, RA Reminick (1973) The Manze Amhara of Ethiopia: A study of authority masculinity and sociality.

into Eritrea, to, at its nadir, perhaps only a small zone in the northern highlands (Clapham 2002).

The 1994 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia formalised ethnicity as a fundamental principle of state organisation, representation and political mobilisation, creating nine regions: Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somalia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNPR), Gambella and Harari (Kefale, 2011). The ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, more commonly known as the EPRDF, held their first democratic elections in 2005. However they suffered greater losses than expected, and delayed the results. The riots and political agitation that resulted from this led the government to take increasingly repressive measures against independent journalists, and the communication systems, shutting down SMS for two years, and filtering online political content (Bevan & Pankhurst, 2007; Hafkin, 2006). The death of Meles Zenawi in 2012, prompted fresh criticism of the new PM, Hailemariam Desalegn, to open up public debate (Gagliardone 2014).

As a result of this, during my period in the field, there was a high level of paranoia about publicly discussing politics, although a demonstration held in Addis after Ethiopian Christians were killed by members of ISIL in Libya in April 2015 was reported (with a pro-government spin) on national media, and sparked some demonstrations in smaller cities, including Bahir Dar, where I lived. While I had been advised to leave the country during the elections of May 2015, they passed peaceably, although some of my informants argued that it was because the troublemakers had been arrested during the April demonstrations. Ongoing issues about freedom of speech and

freedom of the press, demonstrated by the detention and trial of the 'zone 9 bloggers', was reported heavily in foreign newspapers and diaspora run news sites, but did not get a much coverage within the country. Since I left Ethiopia in October 2015, anti-government protests have increased, in number and fervour, and on the 9th October 2016 the Ethiopian government declared a state of emergency[8].

The structuring of Ethiopia as an ethnic federation, matching ethno-linguistic identity with self-administrative structures, is seen as particularly challenging for minority groups who must be able to be recognised as either 'nation, nationality or people', and there are ongoing contestations over identity, territory and entitlement (Kefale, 2011). This is particularly true for the states of Benishangul-Gumuz, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) and Gambella, which are multi-ethnic without any naturally given dominant ethnic group (Tronvoll, 2008). Being based in Amhara, a region seen not only as historically privileged, but as racist towards the darker-skinned inhabitants of the lowlands (Finneran, 2013), gives me a poor vantage point on these issues. The complexities of ethnicity and identity in Ethiopia have been well-described elsewhere (Aalen, 2011; Desplat & Østebø, 2013;

[8] The marathon runner, Feyisa Lilesa, drew attention to the protests after winning Silver at the Rio Olympics, by making the gesture of the protest, arms crossed above his head, and has not returned to Ethiopia (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/14/feyisa-lilesa-being-an-athlete-allowed-me-to-be-the-voice-of-my-people). On Otober 2nd 2016, police fired tear gas and warning shots at a group of protesters attending a religious festival in the Oromo region, leading to a stampede - reports on the death toll vary between 50 and a few hundred. Subsequent attacks on farms and properties, death of a US national after stones were thrown at her car, led the Ethiopian government to declare a state of emergency. This is expected to last at least 6 months, and includes random arrest and searches, outlawing of unauthorised demonstrations, possible curfews and blocking the internet. (See, for e.g. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/ethiopia-declares-state-emergency-protests-161009110506730.html, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-37534387, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/31/ethiopia-state-emergency-risks-new-abuses)

Tronvoll, 2008), but here I briefly describe the idea of 'Amhara' and Ethiopian nationalism.

The 'Amhara'

The origin of the term 'Amhara' is contested. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, the term Amhara was used to refer only to a small province (located in what is now Wollo), or to the language 'Amaregna' (Amharic, may also be spelt as 'Amarigna' 'Amarinya' or 'Amharinya'), which was the language of the state. Most people do not refer to themselves as from the region 'Amhara', but as '*habesha*' (which they use to mean Ethiopian) or as belonging to their province (e.g. Gojjame, from Gojjam) (Michael, 2008). The federal system entails choosing of ethnicity (Nishi, 2005), and Amharic-speaking urban dwellers who identified themselves as 'Ethiopian', regardless of ethnic origin, were also labelled 'Amhara' (Pausewang, 2009).

In the south of Ethiopia, education has predominantly taken place in Amharic, leading to rural communities regarding educated children as 'Amharas', conquerors or oppressors (Cohen, 2000). For these areas, the idea that Ethiopia was never colonised is a false one – instead they see the Amharic-speaking Ethiopia as being the only African power as successful in its "scramble for Africa" (Pausewang, 2009). As many educated children in the south became government workers, they became part of the apparatus of the state, which they view as repressive. Educated members of local language groups were met with hostility, and were even ostracized by their families

for participating in the education system and cooperating with the northern Ethiopians (Cohen, 2000).

The Amhara identity defines itself more strongly through Ethiopian nationalism (Michael, 2008), a strategy of politically dominant (but numerically minority) groups. As Spears describes: "*it might be desirable to encourage the broader and more inclusive Ethiopian identity over a narrower Tigrean or Amhara identity, unless one thinks that being Ethiopian is merely obscuring on-going minority domination and enrichment*" (2007, p. 19). Many people do – the inquisitive greeting "*habesha nat?*" ('are you Ethiopian'?), is met with resistance by those who associate the '*habesha*' identity with a performance of 'whiteness' (due to Amharic being a Semitic language group, and the association between the elites and the West), and the oppression of other Africans, and who prefer to be represented by their own ('black') ethnicity (Ameyu, 2015).

While in predominantly Amharic Bahir Dar, I observed strong demonstrations of an Ethiopian national identity, at military demonstrations and football matches. Other ethnic groups were celebrated through national days in which children dressed up in traditional dress of other areas (the colourful scarves of Harar were particularly popular with the young girls I knew), and through music and dance – both at the cultural restaurants, and on evenings in where we would play music on our phones or local instruments, and the family members would show me the different styles of dance. However, these were celebrations at a distance, and did not necessarily mean that actual interactions with people from these regions showed the same enthusiasm.

Into the field

I arrived in Addis Ababa in October 2015, and after a few weeks I had gained necessary permissions at the government level, and travelled on to Bahir Dar. I had been recommended a small family-run guesthouse in the city, and had made initial plans to stay there. While I waited for Alex and Tadiose, I used the time to settle into the city, explore, wonder around the market, and continue practising Amharic[9]. In the guest house, my host 'mother' spoke a little English, and the rest, none at all, so it was a good opportunity to learn and gain some confidence. When the researchers finally arrived from Addis, we visited successive levels of government to gain approval - below federal government is state (regional) government, then local – '*woreda*' (district), and '*qebele*' (neighbourhood, or village) – organised around either 'Peasants Associations' (PAs) or 'urban associations'.

With the help of Tazebew, who worked at the woreda level agricultural office, we visited the agricultural extension offices in all 5 of the villages that had been shortlisted as meeting my criteria. All five sites had a high level of chicken keeping, but one was very difficult to access as the bridge had recently washed away, and three were difficult to access even when using public transport. The team at EIAR were very reluctant to have me based somewhere remote and without access to assistance if I needed it. Using personal transport was out of the question – cars are incredibly expensive in Ethiopia, and outside of Addis I didn't meet anyone who owned one. Most of the private vehicles seen in Bahir Dar belong to government or

[9] Prior to travelling to Ethiopia, I attended approximately 60 hours of Amharic classes at SOAS, University of London.

non-governmental institutions – and if people need some sort of private transport they will use a taxi or ask a friend who works at those institutions for a favour. At all my meetings, people would joke with me '*we'll give you whatever help you need, except a car!'* As access to an urban market was an important part of my initial plan, I decided to choose the fifth site, Anestenya Wenz, as my primary field site.

Research Area: 'Anestenya Wenz'

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in the West Gojjam Administrative Zone of the Amhara Region, in Northwestern Ethiopia. Mecha Woreda, the rural study study area, adjoins the urban study area, Bahir Dar Zuria, the administrative zone surrounding the Amhara National Regional State capital, Bahir Dar (see map).

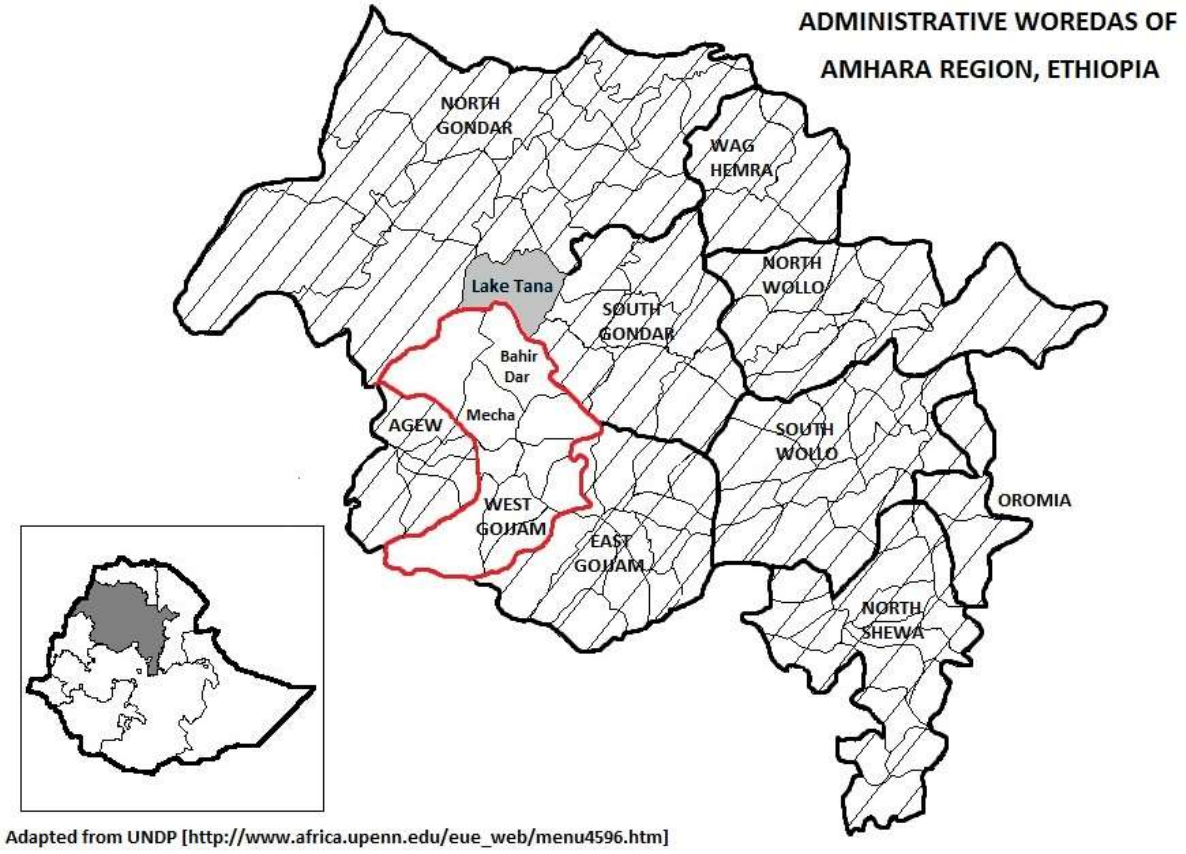


Figure 2. Map of field site

According to the 1994 census, Mecha Woreda consists of 46 Peasants' Associations (PA), and 2 Urban Dwellers' Associations' (Merawi and Wetet Abay), although now they have been restructured, leaving 3 urban *qebeles*, and 37 PAs (Emirie 2005). Thus the names and boundaries given on up-to-date maps do not necessarily reflect how they are viewed by those in the region. The administrative capital of Mecha, lies about 34km south of Bahir Dar, on the main road to the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Its name, Merawi (sometimes also written as Meraye), is derived from the Ge'ez word "bride", and is said to also connotes "good" and "attractive" in the Muslim religion, indicating the fertility and beauty of the locality [Ayele Tamene 2000 in (Emirie 2005)].

Bahir Dar is the state capital, and its surrounding residential areas form part of Bahir Dar Zuria. It lies 558 km from Addis Ababa in a north westerly direction, on the south shore of Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile, and the largest lake in Ethiopia, hence its name (meaning 'sea shore'). The significance of the area as a religious centre can be seen through the large number of monasteries on the islands close to shore in Bahir Dar - the earliest of which was thought to be established in the fourteenth century (UNESCO, 2016), and one of which is believed to be where the Ark of the Covenant was once stored[10]. Under Italian occupation in the 1930s, it grew from a considerable trading town to the administrative centre of the southern territories of Lake Tana, developing roads to Gondar, Addis Ababa and Debre Markos, and a bridge across the Nile. After the expulsion of the Italians, the government invested in further

[10] See Graham Hancock's controversial book '*The Sign and the Seal: The Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant'* (1992)

development of the city, however, protests by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and the shift to an agricultural focus by the Derg, slowed the rate of growth. More recently industrial development has struggled to keep pace with population growth (Appelhans 2011), and there have been increasing problems for displaced farmers on in the peri-urban zones of the city (L. Mekonnen, 2011).

The altitude in this area ranges from 1800 – 2500 metres above sea level, which covers three of the ecological zones, although the majority are situated in the wäyna däga ecological zone (being between 1500-2000m). In this region annual rainfall ranges from 820 to 1250mm, during the short '*belg'* rains in March and April, and the long rain season of '*kerempt*' (from June to September), and the temperature ranges from 17 – 30˚C (Ayenew, Mashresha and Awulachew 2012).

The Amhara highlands are often cited as the origin of plough agriculture in Ethiopia (McCann, 1995), and agriculture remains the dominant economic activity. The main crops grown in this area are wheat, barley, millet and maize, and a range of livestock are reared – cattle, small ruminant, dairy, equines, and poultry. Approximately 73% of smallholders practice mixed crop-livestock farming, 19% crop cultivation, and 8% livestock rearing only (Tassew & Seifu, 2009).

While there has been some attention on the monasteries of Lake Tana[11], and plenty on the royal history of nearby Gondar, there are few written documents tracing the history of this area of West Gojjam. Dr Guday Emirie, an anthropologist from this area, found only one, an unpublished BA Thesis, by Ayele Tamene, who interviewed

[11] E.g. R.E. Cheeseman '*Lake Tana and Its Islands*' (1935), La Verle Berry & Richard Smith '*Churches and Monasteries of Lake Tana, Ethiopia, 1972'* (1979, Gizachew Andargie 'Challenges and prospects of lake Tana island monasteries as a tourist site since 1950's: The case of Kebran Gabriel' (2014)

a number of elders from the area (Emirie 2005). Due to problems accessing other unpublished work stored at Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa University, I have borrowed from the short history of the area she presented in her thesis 'Early Marriage and Its Effects on Girls' Education in Rural Ethiopia: The Case of Mecha Woreda in West Gojjam, North-Western Ethiopia' (Emirie 2005).

The name 'Mecha' derives from the 'Mecha Oromo', although there is some disagreement over when they settled in this area. While the initial relationship between the Gojjames and the Oromo was characterised by raids, trade and fighting, the Oromo were eventually assimilated into the Christian Amhara, and became speakers of the Amharic language. Today the influence of the Oromo in this region can be seen in Oromo names for places and crops.

The building of the road between Bahir Dar and Addis, which runs through Mecha, made Merawi a political centre for the area. From the introduction of modern schooling in 1949, the buildings and enrolment rate expanded, and it finally a senior secondary in 1984. Today the secondary school is a large complex of classrooms, with an IT room, and, in my own experience, a perplexed peacecorps volunteer wondering how you teach IT without any power! The first health clinic was built during the 1970s, meaning that people did not need to travel to Bahir Dar for education and healthcare, and contributed to the growth of Merawi (Emirie 2005). Healthcare provision in these clinics is limited by availability of resources and infrastructure – for example due to an irregular power supply, it is not possible to keep refrigerated medication.

The Koga Irrigation Project, damming the Koga river, a tributary of the Blue Nile, had led to settling of displaced farmers in Merawi a decade ago (Eguavoen & Tesfai, 2012). During the period I was in the field, huge developments of housing grew along the road on the outskirts of the town. This reflects the changing balance of rural and urban residency in Ethiopia – Mecha woreda has seen a 20% increase in population and a doubling of the urban population since the last census in 1995, to 292,080 inhabitants, and 7.7% urban population (CSA, 2007b; Emirie, 2005). Bahir Dar Zuria is of a comparable size, with 221,991 inhabitants, of whom 81% live in the urban areas (CSA, 2007b).

The modern population of the Amhara region, as recorded by the 2007 census, are predominantly Amharas (91%). All of the country's ethnic groups are represented to some extent across the region, but the Agew, Oromo, and Tigray make up most of the remaining 9%. This is also reflected in the mother tongue (93% Amharic). While broadly speaking the northern, Amharic speaking half of the country is Ethiopian Orthodox Christian, and the southern, Oromic speaking half of the country is Muslim, there has been considerable movement of populations around Ethiopia. The Amhara region is 83% Orthodox Christian, and 17% Muslim, with small groups of Protestant, Catholic and Traditional beliefs[12] according to the census (CSA, 2007b). However, my fieldwork suggested that the Muslim population was centred around the towns and cities, and the rural areas are primarily Christian. In addition, I found that both

[12] The CSA (Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia) does not clarify what is included in the category of 'Traditional' beliefs. The six categories it lists are: Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Traditional and Other, which includes world religions such as Judaism, Hinduism and Bahai.

Muslims and Christians practiced some form of spirit rituals, although they would not have answered positively to the questions on the census about traditional beliefs.

Despite the growth of education facilities available – all the villages I visited had a local primary school - educational attainment is low, due to a number of barriers to education, including early marriage, labour demands, family obligations, attitudes towards gender and education, and low power of enforcing mandatory schooling (Admassie, 2003; Erulkar, Mekbib, Simie, & Gulema, 2004). Literacy data on Mecha was not available, but in the West Gojjam zone, urban literacy rates were at 73%, and rural 35%, and in Bahir Dar area 74% for the urban population, and 42% for the rural. The differences in literacy rates between urban and rural populations partly reflect the migration of educated men and women to the urban areas for employment within government and NGOs, and for further education (there are no secondary schools in the rural areas). In Mecha 68% had never attended school - 27% in the urban areas, and 72% in the rural area, whilst in Bahir Dar, 32% had never attended school. More females than males had never attended school, and this is reflected in differences in the literacy rates between these groups. In the Amhara region, less than 50% of the population over 5 years of age had completed more than 5 years of primary education, less than 6% had completed secondary education, and less than had 1% completed a Bachelors degree, although this proportion is increasing in younger age groups (CSA, 2007c).

Most of my research was carried out at Anestenya Wenz – one of the PAs of Mecha Woreda. Containing 1488 households, a primary school, veterinary clinic and health clinic, it is often visited by officials of government, NGOs and others who want to see

the countryside. One government employee proudly told me that even UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon had visited the area. Extension workers would proudly show me pictures and videos on their phone of visiting officials being treated to traditional dancing and food to welcome them to the village – I had an opportunity to see this myself when a tree nursery was opened in a nearby village, part of a Joint Technical Program between MASHAV (Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation), USAID (United States Agency for International Development), and the MoA (Ethiopia's Ministry of Agriculture).

Running through the village of Anestenya Wenz is a stream, which transforms from a trickle to an uncrossable barrier in the rainy season. The village is bisected by the tarmacked road, which provides good access to two of the five local markets in the region, as well as hosting its own small market a few days of the week. Along the road are a number of small shops, through the window of which it is possible to purchase basic (and affordable) items, such as plastic combs, packets of 'omo' (washing powder), blue soaps, and individual sweets. There are a variety of establishments where it is possible to buy *shay* (tea), *buna* (coffee), *tälla* (local beer), *araqi* (local liquor) or food - usually *shuro*, a spicy chickpea paste, served with the ubiquitous *injera*, or *firfir, injera* strips cooked in *wot*, a spicy stew, and of course, served with more *injera*. At breakfast time in a *shay bet* (tea house), it is also possible to get a hot slice of *ambesha*, a spongy and filling bread, with tea, which is usually made with about half a glass of sugar.

To the north and south of the village are two round, brightly painted churches, surrounded by the only wild wooded grounds in the area, the rest being intensively

farmed eucalyptus and cereals. There is a primary school to the north of the village, about 10 minutes walk along the tarmacked road from the centre, which was being refurbished while I was there by Dutch charity, to provide light, concrete-built classrooms. Part of the village has access to the irrigation project, but the majority rely on rain-fed agriculture. In the year I was in the field, the rains arrived late, leading to considerable problems nationally[13], however, in my area of study, the maize had grown tall by the time I left at the end of *kerempt*.

Anestenya Wenz is on the asphalt road between two local markets, and only about 40 km from Bahir Dar city, so it could be reached by minibus in about an hour. The village is made of fewer than 1500 households, about 300 of which are female-headed, and there were approximately 4500 chickens registered by the local agricultural extension agents (otherwise known as development agents). The teachers at the local primary school were willing to be involved, and there was a female agricultural extension agent, Yeshi. We agreed that I would need to arrange an assistant to act as a translator and guide, but until this could be done, I would make visits to Anestenya Wenz and shadow Yeshi, in order to get to know the village better. The EIAR researchers would be returning in a month, to do their own survey, collecting primary data on poultry care for a study to evaluate a vaccination for Newcastle Disease. At the time, our plan was that I would accompany them on that, in order to get a chance to explore the surrounding area, which was difficult to access

[13] See: http://www.fao.org/emergencies/countries/detail/en/c/151593/, http://www.unocha.org/eastern-africa/about-us/about-ocha-eastern-africa/ethiopia

without a 4x4, and during this period we would arrange someone to act as my assistant.

Getting started

Unfortunately, the EIAR researchers experienced a delay in funding and availability, and was not able to carry out their studies in Bahir Dar for a few months. I made a number of visits to Anestenya Wenz alone, but due to mutual misunderstandings with the extension agents, could not advance as far as we had hoped. I had further papers to arrange in Addis Ababa, and used this time to access studies carried out by students and researchers in the country, stored at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies based at Addis Ababa University, and the EIAR libraries. When I returned to Bahir Dar, I was able to access some of the research done in the area by students at Bahir Dar University.

In the initial period of fieldwork I stayed in that same guesthouse, and quickly was made to feel part of the family – they had previously had another PhD student living there and were supportive and encouraging. Like my contacts in the research institutions, they tried strongly to deter me from moving out into the countryside, which was my initial plan. Most of them were worried about the living conditions in the field site – in particular in relation to health and access to clean water. However when I persisted, I was offered a place in the guesthouse whenever I needed to shower and use the internet to call home or catch up on my work, and they even came with me to the market to make sure I got the best prices for my household items.

I moved initially to the main town in the woreda, Merawi, and put up in the 'best' hotel, a concrete building with a bathroom with limited plumbing, where they counted out the squares of toilet paper they handed over to you when you paid the bill every night. The downstairs area was a popular restaurant in the day, serving generous portions of Ethiopian food or spaghetti, and what sounded like a very busy bar in the evening (early on I had realised that women were not supposed to share in those public spaces). During this week I met with a few contacts, teachers at local schools, who could have provided support, and who offered to help me find somewhere to live.

Unsure of how to properly negotiate these meetings, I am aware now that I handled these relationships clumsily, not being able to read what was politeness, and when and how much financial compensation was expected for services presented as favours. The connectedness of relationships and exchange is well summarised by Mains - "in the Ethiopian case, it is difficult to say whether relationships are intended to produce gifts or gifts produce relationships" (2012, p. 14).

In the end, finding my translators was serendipitous – on the way to the library at Bahir Dar University, I had got to speaking to the bajaj driver, who told me he knew many peacecorps volunteers, and one that lived in the area that I was working. He offered to put her in touch with me, and she turned out to be one of my most essential supports. She in turn introduced me to a European man who had settled on a collective farm, and married a local woman, and he thought a friend of his, Abraham, who worked in one of the regional government bureaus, and had a personal interest in chickens would be useful.

Abraham was keen to be involved in the project, as it gave him a good opportunity to travel around the nearby countryside, learn about traditional practices, and about chickens. Due to his own employment, he was not able to assist me every day in the field, so we agreed that we would work together a few days a week, and he would find me a suitable recent graduate that could help me more regularly. He suggested some young female graduates, one of whom, Hiwot, had worked for a local charity as a farm survey enumerator, and had a good knowledge of the area of study. Like many Ethiopian women, she was very quiet, but I hoped that once she came to know me better, she would feel more comfortable talking at length. The other, Selam, was much more uncertain, but I thought she might be able to help with market surveys, and she ended up being a welcome friend.

The initial plan was that with Hiwot I would visit the main field site of Anestenya Wenz, as well as the other towns and villages in Mecha woreda, and with Abebe I would visit the rural and peri-urban settlements around Bahir Dar, as well as the urban producers, and anyone else from the groups I had identified as being important. Selam would provide additional support for market surveys in Bahir Dar.

In order to get access to different points of view, additional research was carried out at Wetet Abay, and Merawi, the urban regions in Mecha, and in rural Korebta, peri-urban Medamma, and urban areas of Bahir Dar[14]. Korebta was a significant second site, with some slight differences in amenities, such as use of individual wells, rather than a communal pump. It is similar culturally, primarily Ethiopian Orthodox Christian, and nearer to the lake, on the north side of Bahir Dar, reachable by minibus

[14] These names are pseudonyms

from the city centre. Its nearest market town, was a short minibus ride away on the road to Bahir Dar, and could be walked in approximately an hour along the tarmacked road – although people were astonished that a *ferenji* (foreigner) could manage this journey. Wetet Abay was the main market town for people in Anestenya Wenz, and predominately Muslim. Medamma was a peri-urban area around BD, which had seen considerable industrial investment and displacement of farmers due to the building of a university and army barracks. As well as conducting interviews in Wetet Abay and Merawi, I lived in Merawi for a few months, and had friends who lived in both places, giving me opportunities to visit and spend time with their host families or in the local tea houses. These additional sites gave me the opportunity to speak to a mixture of people, farmers and urban inhabitants, Christian and Muslims, from the area.

Relations in the field site

It was clear that with most people living in one or two room houses, and space being in short supply, there would not be a place for me to easily move in to, although I would have preferred to live with a local family in my research village. From the hotel in Merawi, I moved to a 'modern style' house built of traditional materials, in the town. It had mismatched sheets of lino on the floor, a wooden bed, and been fitted with a small satellite television and fridge, although the power supply was too irregular to run either. A standing pipe at the back of the house would have water for half an hour on Mondays, from 6 a.m., and the owner of the house would send her *säratäña* (maid) here for their supply. From this house I would catch the local bus to Anestenya Wenz, which offered me a good opportunity to become better known in

the area, as there would always be one of the teachers or extension workers waiting at the bus station.

Once at the village I would walk past the area that served as a market two days a week, around the mill houses, and up the path towards the compound that housed the extension agents' offices and veterinary surgery. The compound contained a large open area in the shade of tall eucalyptus trees, and this would be used as the site for meetings. If there were meetings on I would seek the approval of the extension agents and sit on the periphery to observe, if there weren't I might seek out the company of the extension agents or the vets if they were in their offices – however their hours of work were not particularly fixed, and some days they might be on their own field visits. If that was the case I would sit in the compound and make conversation with passing women and children until Hiwot arrived.

We had initially intended to work with the extension agents, however Alex and Tadiose had warned me that due to the frequency of interventions in the area, the extension agents had come to expect a high rate of pay for any information or assistance given. Although I was happy to compensate people for time given, they were not interested in provision of mutual assistance, or with us shadowing them during their normal tasks. I found it difficult to frame the differences in our situations in such a way that people could understand that I could not bring them a laptop or a smart phone, particularly with those who already had access to these things, and this often made those relationships quite strained. In Ethiopia, when a person has some good fortune, it is expected that this is shared with others, and thus to form a social relationship with someone is to take on that responsibility (Mains, 2012). A friend

who worked as an enumerator illustrated this to me when she told me that even though her urban friends laughed at her for working in the countryside, since jobs were hard to come by for graduates they expected her to pay for food and drinks when they met.

While initial introductions through extension agents were to the 'model farmers' involved in the One-five extension programme (see **[Extensive]** – agricultural extension), my eventual separation from them made my relationships with farmers more relaxed. Prior to fieldwork, I had been worried about the potential impact of gaining access through an institution. The possibility that consent for participation would be related to unwillingness to be seen to refuse requests of authority (Crang & Cook, 1995), turned out to be more of a problem with the extension agents agreeing to help me, than with the farmers, who were unconcerned with turning me down if they were busy or not interested in participating. The other key concern, that farmers would be unwilling to reveal information that may have repercussions (Van Damme et al., 2013), seemed to be bypassed by my association with country-level, rather than local, organisations, and my status as an outsider (Gokah, 2006).

Pausewang explains that due to political changes in Ethiopia, extension agents were not trusted historically, in particular during the Mengistu regime - "by 1985 it was obvious that the extension department of the ministry of agriculture had become the line of command through which the government reached the entire rural population with its orders and control" (2002, p. 88). He states that during the elections of 2000, repayments for fertiliser were used to pressure farmers into voting for the ruling party. Even when not seen as being spies for the government, as front-line workers,

extension agents have had to explain new restrictions, implement systems of forced sale to the grain board, ensure collection of taxes, and implement resettlement and villagisation programmes, which has made them very unpopular, and there is still a prevailing belief that they work only for their own benefit, not for that of the farmers. As one young man told me:

"*I am an ex-soldier, I started life from scratch, I know how people can change their life. What I see here is poverty, the government say they want to eradicate poverty, but they don't do this, they only talk about it... the people in the upper levels, they are trying to make a change, but those whose responsibility is to do this [the extension agents], they just sit in the café!*" [Bekele, 33, a small business owner]

There is an interesting separation between the extension agents as individuals, and the government as a whole, which is seen as responsible for advances in rural areas, such as schools and health clinics. There is not room to discuss these here, but I use these examples here to demonstrate how my not being associated with these offices enabled farmers to feel comfortable criticising them. People were pleased that a foreigner was taking an interest in the farmers themselves, and not just listening to the extension agents – as I was told on more than one occasion *'the government should hear the voice of the people'*.

Research approach

I began work with Hiwot in Anestenya Wenz by going from house-to-house, introducing ourselves, and if people were interested, using an interview guide as a starting point, covering household demographics, and basic livestock management practices. There has been a lot of intervention and research happening in this area,

such as around the Koga Dam, and people were familiar with answering questions – for some, this meant that they answered questions quickly and matter-of-factly, for others, that they weren't interested in speaking to me, and for others, it was a good opportunity to air grievances. If people were talkative, we would ask more detailed questions, or delve further into things mentioned during the conversation.

It was important that the majority of interviews were conducted with women, as they are primarily responsible for the care of chickens (Halima, 2007). We tried to speak to the women in the households alone or in small groups with other women, as we were afraid the presence of their husbands might make them feel uncomfortable. Studies in Ethiopia, focussing on group discussions, found that although male farmers acknowledged the special knowledge of women in regards to chickens, women's voices were not often heard (Aklilu et al., 2008), and others have suggested that to avoid male dominance in these settings, conducting interviews in women-only groups would be more useful in research oriented towards women (Bagnol, 2009).

For some, the return of the husband to the house completely stopped the flow of conversation as he would take over. For others, the husband would encourage their wives to speak, reminding them that they held the knowledge about chickens, it was their responsibility and they would be the best person to answer. Part of the reticence in responding to questions comes from expectations of female behaviour. Girls are not expected to be heard in public, and it is common for women to cover their mouth with their hand or scarf when speaking. Many women spoke to us in a barely audible whisper, or while inhaling, similar to the sharp intake of breath used

to demonstrate agreement. Poluha characterises the idea of the 'good girl' based on interviews at a school in Addis Ababa as follows –

> "*'Good' girls should not speak in a loud voice; preferably their voices should not be heard at all... Girls were supposed to hide their bodies in cloth, not use big movements when they played and not participate in sports activities in school that could reveal intimate parts of their bodies… Girls would often shrink physically in the street and in front of adults.*" (2004, p. 140)

Even though both Hiwot and I were female, we were still outsiders, Hiwot because she was urban and educated, and me because I was foreign. The issue of the anthropologist as an outsider has tended to focus on idea of the 'male, anglo-saxon, European' anthropologist (John, 1996) and the potential impact of the differences between them and those they study has been well debated (Gregory, 1984; Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, & Ballerino Cohen, 1989; Slocum, 1975). More recently, female scholars have focussed on more subtle differences, such as being unmarried, childless, or educated (Huisman, 2008; Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2009). While we carry out own sense of 'who we are', our identity is constructed in relation to others – as Frantz Fanon describes in *Black Skins, White Masks*, it is the reaction of a white child that makes him realise that he is different, in being black (1952). This aspect of construction of identities through a process in which significant similarities and differences are decided has been well described in writings of non-Caucasian British people, (Hall, 1991) and certainly reflect my own experiences as a second-generation Mauritian. When these differences are moved abroad again, the research then faces the

expectations of another group of people, as Shaery-Eisenlohr experiences as an 'unveiled German-American of Shi'ite Iranian origin' in Lebanon, who did not fit the expectations of her Lebanese participants seen on the television and in the news (2009).

The first expectation of many people that I met was that all English people were white – one woman I spoke to with Abraham could not believe that I wasn't 'habesha' (Ethiopian), saying to him "*I have seen the white ferenjis in Bahir Dar… I did not know they were red... I thought she was a girl from the city*". As Bollywood movies are very popular in Ethiopia, some would note my similarity to the actresses in the posters, with my lighter skin and long wavy hair, and insist I was Indian. When they learnt that my parents were Mauritian, they would ask where it was, nod, and say 'oh so you're African too!' People would emphatically insist that the identity I was presenting was false as it did not fit in with the view they had built from movies, in which Americans come in all ethnicities, but English people were only white, similar to the experiences of Shaery-Eisenlohr above. Despite Ethiopia's complex relationship with the rest of the continent, the ability to find commonality in being 'African' enabled me to establish relationships with people in the village. It was only a few generations ago that my own extended family lived in houses of mud and straw, grew cane and were farm labourers. For many farmers, this explanation was sufficient – many of their own children had moved to the big cities, and they knew of those who had moved abroad to Europe or the USA, undergoing the same transition my family had. By speaking some Amharic, and eating *injera* with my hands, people would describe me as being or becoming Ethiopian, something I will explore further in the chapter on food.

Whilst some have found “the fact that we were all women” a base for commonality (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012), this is dependent on shared interests, and shared experiences. My own experiences as an unmarried, childless, educated woman was very different to women of a similar age to me in the Amhara region, where early marriage is common (Emirie, 2005), female literacy is only 32% (CSA, 2007c), and the average number of children ever born to women of my age was 2.62, with some women my age reaching 10 children (CSA, 2007d). In addition, our practical ‘life skills’ were vastly different. This has been presented as something that creates relations of power between the researcher and the researched (Huisman, 2008; John, 1996), but it was usually me that felt awkward, lacking local knowledge, and having to ask questions that even children would know the answer to.

These differences between myself and the women meant that to begin with many women were shy, and often started interviews saying “I don’t know if I can answer these questions” or frequently answer “I don’t know”. However, I was careful to represent myself as not being an ‘expert’ and the light nature of the initial subject matter, meant that they usually became much less concerned with how they appeared to us. In the presence of their friends, over a few cups of coffee, they happily spoke in detail about cultural aspects of keeping and eating chickens, and later on, about more general topics that were affecting their lives.

As people become more used to the sight of me and Hiwot making our way across the fields in the midday heat, or trudging through muddy lanes, we would be recognised, and people would come up to us and start conversations about their chickens, sharing their problems, or showing us their new purchases. I started to add

more questions into the interview guide, about things that had learnt during interviews, such as traditional treatments for sick chickens. The first interview guide we used is shown below:

Informal interview topics (farmers)

Introduce: interested in life in the countryside, especially about chickens
Try to cover as much as possible, but not strict.

A. Name (and name of spouse)
B. Age
C. Composition of household?
D. Occupation?
E. Children in school?
F. How long have lived in area? Tell me about it?
G. Grow crops? Tell me about them?
H. Ownership of livestock? Tell me about them?
I. [If not, why not? What is source of household income]
   If have chickens:
J. How many?
K. Habesha or exotic? Why?
L. Who takes care of them? How?
M. What do you use them for? (More details e.g. if sell, where, etc.)

And if have a longer time, can ask in more detail about systems of care:

N. Feeding
O. Water
P. Shelter
Q. Protection from predators
R. Disease?
S. What do you do if birds diseased?
T. Any other problems?

Figure 3. Initial Interview Guide

The aims of this initial interview guide was both to capture basic data about crops, livestock and care of poultry as identified in the figure above, and to introduce ourselves to many households as interested in aspects of poultry keeping. Aside from

initial questions about the respondents name and age, we did not administer the questions in a fixed particular order, and allowed those we interviewed to direct the conversations. As we did not want the interviews to become excessive in length, we noted answers of interest to pursue in future conversations, however, we were able to ask more specific questions within the scope of this guide – for example, we were able to ask questions about use of particular plants in treatment of disease.

One of the problems we had encountered is that we could not get a clear idea of which predators were causing problems – local names and descriptions varied so widely that even Hiwot and Abebe were at a loss. To cope with this I used a list of predators that could be found in Ethiopia[15], searched for images, and printed them at a local photo shop, including a few repeats to see if people would identify the same animal twice if the photo was taken from a different angle (these are included in the appendix). We then handed people the photos in small groups in their homes or in *tälla bet* (beer houses), and would note the content of discussion, and the final identification of the animals.

I decided not to use a voice recorder in most situations, as the presence of it in most situations disrupted flow more than taking handwritten notes. For the same reason we decided to use verbal consent, as there is a high level of distrust of paperwork, particularly as the level of literacy in the area is still low[16]. At the end of the day I would type up in full the content of the interviews and any observations from the day

[15] The initial list I found on a safari tour website: http://www.yumo.net/destinations/safari-tours. The Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS), confirmed the species and the translations by email.

[16] For an extreme reaction to this, see Cramer et al. (2016) '*Research Note: Mistakes, crises, and research independence: The perils of fieldwork as a form of evidence*'

I the field, along with a personal log of things that had occurred. This gave me time to reflect on new or interesting things, and formulate ideas for further questions. I had wanted to take photos and videos during the course of fieldwork, but in the end made the decision to take few photos of people, and focus on taking a few quick photos of the fieldsite and chickens, and spent free time in field sites sketching. People particularly seemed to enjoy watching me sketch and label items in the immediate environment.

After a few months I had conducted 150 amount of interviews in Anestenya Wenz, and 40 in Korebta. These early months raised many questions about how the marketing of chickens was linked to their cultural uses, and so I devised a second interview guide, which was used in a very flexible way depending on the interest and enthusiasm of interviewees. The initial part of the interview guide dealt with food – when and how chickens are eaten, and which types are preferred for this purpose. The second part covered their own and others behaviour when selling chickens, and information in the market. I started with open questions about other uses for chickens, other than home consumption and sale, and then would prompt with specific cultural practices if people were unsure about what was meant. The interview guide is shown below:

Informal Interview Topics (Round 2) Farmers, Consumers

Food
A. Frequency of consumption – eggs/chicken
B. Which animals – buy or own?
C. When?
D. Who eats?
E. How is it prepared?
F. If more productive would eat or sell? Why?
G. What type is best to eat?

Market
I. Frequency of sale – chickens/eggs
J. Where and when?
K. Who to? How fix the price?
L. During fasting period – who is buying?
M. Consumer preferences?
N. Who takes to market? Any reason?
O. Use of money from chicken sales.

P. Frequency of purchase - chickens/eggs
Q. Buy for consumption or production?
R. How to choose chicken? (e.g. trusted person, health, etc.) Different if consumption or production?
S. What chickens available in the local markets?
T. How do they know whether mixed or habesha in market?

U. How does price change over the year? Why?
V. How does price change by type of chicken?

W. Other occasions where chicken important? Other than consumption and home, and sale, other uses for chickens?

Figure 4. Interview guide, follow up – marketing and use of chickens

Here, we were also able to prompt respondents about specific aspects of questions, such as giving examples of checking the health of chickens, and asking if they used these practices. If we had willing groups - such as drinking in a *shay bet* (tea house), we would pose more general questions, or ask them their opinions on things we had heard elsewhere, such as reasons for cultural practices, or on the meanings of proverbs involving chickens. These conversations became more both more useful and enjoyable as my language skills improved and I could understand (and occasionally join in) the jokes. The second round interview was conducted in Anestenya Wenz with

approximately half of the households I had visited before, and in Korebta to 20 households at random. At this stage we also conducted 20 interviews in the additional locations (Merawi, Wetet Abay and Medamma), including some demographic information if we hadn't collected this already.

Other approaches to data collection

For the duration of the research we attempted to collect simple market information – such as distance travelled, frequency and volume of sale, and changing prices through the year, for both farmers and traders. The first few instances, I had gone with either Hiwot or Selam, but my presence had caused such disruption that it had been difficult to either sit and observe, or conduct the quick survey questions. Although not far from the urban centre of Bahir Dar, and *ferenjis* (foreigners) living in the areas (mostly volunteers working for NGOs), research was usually conducted by enumerators, and not the *ferenjis* themselves. In addition, many people at the market travelled from distant villages and were unlikely to have had an opportunity to interact with a foreigner, even if they had visited the village before. In the end, having explained how to complete the form, and reviewing their work a few times, I asked Hiwot and Selam to complete them on a mixture of days and times throughout the year. On a few occasions I would go along with them, to observe their work and the activities in the market, but it was only in Bahir Dar that I attracted the least attention and could have meaningful conversations with the farmers and traders selling chickens and eggs. They did 30 days market surveys in total, over 4 locations. The market survey is inserted below:

Location _____ Name _____

Date_____ Day_____ Time _____

Other info:

Age _____ Gender _____

Where come from?_____ Time travel _____

Mode of travel _____ Came alone?_____

(If no, details)_____

SELLING:

Farmer/trader/other:_____ Produce

_____

How many brought to market?_____ How many left

_____

Why this market?_____

How often?_____

Sell anywhere else? Why? _____

Price (SELL) Today _____ Last week _____

If trader, where bought chickens? Why? _____

BUYING:

Trader/consumer/other:_____ Produce

_____

How many bought at market?_____ How many will buy (total) _____

Why [this market?]_____

How often?_____

Buy anywhere else? Why? _____

If consumer, why buying? _____

How choose? E.g. colour, weight etc._____

Price (BUY) Today _____ Last week _____

If trader, where sell chickens? Why? _____

Sell anywhere else? Why? _____

Price (SELL) Today _____ Last week _____

ALL

How long been keeping/selling chickens/eggs_____

Why selling chickens/eggs?_____

_____

Any other information (continue on back):

Figure 5. Market survey

Urban producers were found through contacts of Abebe and Hiwot initially, and then through their own networks of contacts. We interviewed 10 producers in total, based at a few different locations of urban farms around Bahir Dar. We also managed to speak to others with specialist knowledge, such as veterinarians and advocates of local business. I had hoped to speak to restaurants and hotels about their experiences of sources and customer preferences, but Selam found that they were unwilling to participate – stating that they were too busy.

Through contacts at the Agricultural Bureau in Bahir Dar, I was also able to attend demonstrations of new technology, meetings with farmers, and openings of new centres. The team from EIAR did manage to come to the region after a few months, and I joined them on their data collection trips, which gave me an opportunity to visit some more remote areas of the region.

Some interviewees were more difficult to find, in particular the practitioners of spirit based healing. Local contacts had suggested two based in a small town to the north of Korebta. We never found any based in the southern area of Bahir Dar where most of the interviews were carried out, as people were much more adamant that these practices no longer occurred. The first in this town, an elderly woman who was confined to her house by ill-health, was defensive and angry, and would speak to us only if we were customers. The second, was a Muslim man, who after we had explained our purpose standing by the gates, allowed me access into the compound, but not into the prayer area in front of the house, as I wearing my usual field clothes of jeans, long blouse, and scarf for modesty/sun protection. My interview with him was thus conducted perched on the wall that ran around the house, and the follow-

up interview, where we would have been able to observe the prayers to remove the spirits dwelling inside people during an overnight stay, unfortunately never materialised. I was not surprised by this difficulty – in his studies in the Zege peninsula in Bahir Dar, Boylston found that people denied the existence of an organised cult of zar possession, and that the profession of the *awaqi* (translated directly as 'the practitioners'), relied on secrecy. He describes his attempt to interview a spirit medium as being 'both disastrous and instructive', in which encouraged by some his young male friends, he consulted an *awaqi* in search of a stolen camera, allowing them to break social taboos by visiting her with him, and leading to the arrest of an innocent young man (2012, p. 154).

Fieldwork challenges

One of the key challenges in establishing and managing relationships in the field was expectations of how women should behave, and perceptions of western women in particular. The English-language cultural exports of movies and football had built a particular idea of what European and American culture was like, in which people were rich, sexually promiscuous, and drank to excess, was a key problem in how interactions occurred with those who accessed popular media, but did not personally know anyone who lived in these places. A woman alone in Ethiopia is rare – even in the capital of Addis Ababa it would draw attention. A woman living alone, in the small town of Merawi, and without the support of a well-known institution, was isolating. Aside from visits to the market, and to meet the few people I did know locally, I felt limited to my house. This prompted my decision to move back to Bahir Dar and commute to the villages where I was conducting my research. At the time, this felt

like a huge failure to conduct ethnographic research 'as it should be done', but on reflection, the relationships I had formed in the city allowed me to become more confident in my language skills, and to feel 'at home'. In addition, it allowed me to strengthen other networks, with local government agencies and expats working for NGOs, which gave me insight into other perspectives, and opportunities to meet other contacts, such as urban chicken producers. Even travelling in the crowded minibus every day gave me an opportunity to speak to a wide range of people – farmers, traders, teachers, and engineers and agricultural experts working on the projects around the irrigation sites.

Despite my wearing a wedding ring, men, although usually married themselves, were very persistent. In one tense exchange with what had been, until then, an interesting and friendly contact, I was told "In England your politicians and footballers all have affairs so it is your culture." In conversation with other foreign women conducting research or working in Ethiopia, it was clear that many of us had to terminate potentially useful relationships, even in professional situations, due to these difficulties. As most of us had to gain or maintain access through mostly male workers in the field, it could often be a significant barrier to progress, forcing us to find other routes to our data collection goals, building new contacts, or even finding new field sites.

Expectations of reciprocity were also difficult to meet. For example, after spending an hour with me at a farmer's house, where we drank coffee and chatted about my research, one extension agent asked if I would bring her a laptop. Another, who I had met and spoken to at a few meetings, asked me if I would get him a visa or a

scholarship. Explaining that as a student, I did not have the funding or power to do any of these things, was met with a certain level of disbelief and cooling of relationships. I was incredibly glad that I had taken a durable phone with buttons, in contrast to their own smart phones, as it supported my insistence that I did not have the money that NGOs often have. While the initial loss of relationships with the extenstion agents was a blow, it enabled me to speak to the farmers without their influence, and gain more open responses. Unfortunately, it means that the views of the extension agents themselves are poorly represented in this research.

My own expectations of how work should progress was also frustrating. Prior to starting fieldwork, I had little choice but to wait for contacts to return to areas in which they could access the internet. While the Ethiopian bureaucratic love for purple stamps had inspired some of my friends to have their own made in order to speed up the progress of their correspondences, the attitude to time, in a place with little infrastructure and unreliable transport, is necessarily more relaxed. The extension agents often did not keep appointments, which at the initial stage of my research, would leave me alone in the village with not much I could do except draw the excited attention of the children, who would shout '*ferenji, ferenji*!' (foreigner), giggle, and run away. This was my first of many experiences of waiting hours, days or even weeks for pre-arranged meetings. At first, I found this very difficult to handle, as I felt a pressure to 'make things happen', but during the course of the year I learnt to relax into the pace and way of work, and that it just wasn't possible to force these things to happen. By just being in the place, and being open to experiences, new contacts and areas of interest would slowly appear – for example, I was invited to meetings just because I was in the development offices compound, waiting for Hiwot.

It was also where I befriended some of the local children as they became less shy of talking to me, and would stop on their way to fetch water.

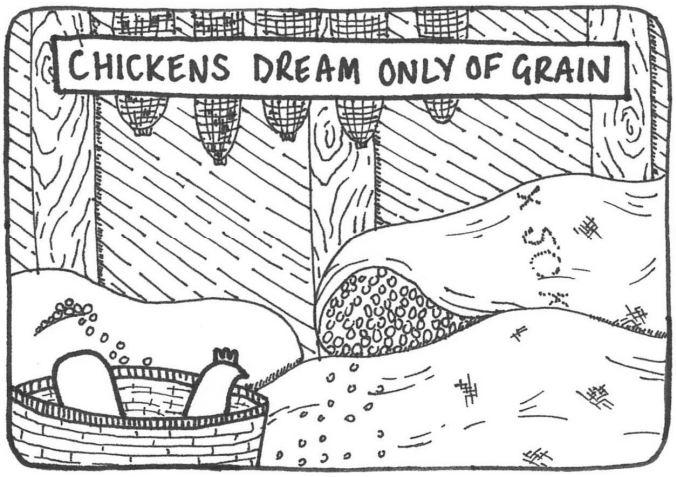
Language

Reading ethnographic accounts one is often given the impression that purely by spending time in a location, practising your language skills, and being seen in public spaces, networks of contacts, and local fluency, in both language and culture, would emerge (Borchgrevink, 2003). At the time, it certainly did not feel that way, and without the support of my translators I would not have been able to conduct the conversations that I had done. I attained a sufficient level to make myself understood to my local family, and understand them in turn, and to go about daily business in shops and on public transport, but was often frustrated by my inability to progress further or faster. I used a translator for interviews for the duration of the fieldwork, as alone I would not have done respondents' answers justice, and in addition I found that they improved access, data collection, and my own language learning. As locals, my interpreters helped provide explanations of local vernacular and proverbs, gossip, news and local differences, and deterred presentation of false information – and as such can also be seen as an ethnographic informant (Bujra, 2006).

I spent just under a year in total in Ethiopia, taking a short break for Christmas with my family, and taking the cautious advice of local friends to spend the election period in May 2015 with friends elsewhere in Africa. Occasional visitors from the UK gave me an opportunity to explore other parts of the country, which illuminated for me the vast differences in culture. During the last few weeks in Ethiopia I also tried to

arrange meetings with relevant authorities, to update them on my findings so far, and hear their own thoughts. The Culture Bureau were particularly helpful, providing me with some readings I had not seen, and arranging a meeting with a priest who had good knowledge of local history and culture. However, a constant frustration during the fieldwork period, was that meetings I had been chasing for months and arranged other schedules around, failed to materialise before I had left the country.

Levine spoke about the Amhara tradition of *säm-ïnna warq* 'wax and gold', a form of wordplay in which a hidden meaning 'gold', is found within the apparent meaning 'wax' (Levine, 1965). This is reminiscent of the approach of ethnography, in which the researcher attempts to understand the local context, in order to see the meanings that for locals are hidden in plain sight. Like the 'egg' in the proverb of the title, I had to slowly learn to 'walk', to navigate expected behaviour for women, and speak Amharic. This research represents the efforts of a year attempting to try to find the gold hidden in the wax.



Extensive

As [**Introduction**] explains, chickens play an important role in the economic strategy of rural and urban households across the world. Chickens can be found across the agro-ecological settings in Ethiopia, with varying traits that fit the cultural as well as environmental conditions of the area (Reta, 2009), although my research looks at the Amhara region, which has one of the highest densities of poultry, with over 65% of households keeping poultry (Pagani & Wossene, 2008). In this chapter, I focus on what has been described as 'traditional', 'extensive' or 'village' chicken keeping practices, while 'intensive' or 'commercial' poultry management in this region is described in the penultimate chapter.

With 98% of the national poultry flock in Ethiopia represented by local breeds (Pagani & Wossene, 2008), it is evident that village poultry plays a significant role in Ethiopia. The village chicken system is usually portrayed as not requiring a great deal of

investment of time and resources by farmers, and they constitute an important part of the household strategy, as the following quote from an industry report demonstrates:

> "*This system is characterized by a low input (scavenging is almost the only source of diet), low input of veterinary services, minimal level of bio-security, high off-take rates and high levels of mortality. Here, there is little or no inputs for housing, feeding or health care. As such it does not involve investments beyond the cost of the foundation stock, a few handfuls of local grains, and possibly simple night shades, mostly night time housing in the family dwellings.*" (Alemu et al., 2008, p. 22)

When asked, most farmers initially seemed to agree with the characterisation of chickens as not just 'low' input, but 'no' input – saying that 'you don't need to take care of chickens, they take care of themselves'. While local breeds of chickens are much less work than larger livestock, which require herding, shelter and grazing, farmers have developed practices around reproduction, health and protection of chickens to ensure the success of their flocks. Additionally, attitudes towards care of chickens is changing due to extension activities, and the introduction of 'improved' breeds, which require greater investment of time and resources, such as specialist feed and shelters.

Types of Chickens

The local breeds of chickens are known generally as '*habesha*' (Ethiopian) chickens. While one respondent in Merawi compared chickens from Gondar, the area adjacent to Gojjam, unfavourably to local chickens, no-one described chickens from the Mecha

area with particular names. Farmers rarely encountered chickens from other areas due to the distance between markets and lack of infrastructure, and no other farmers identified chickens more specifically than '*habesha*' or '*ferenji*' (introduced exotic breeds). Attempts to characterise chickens morphologically have also named groups by region – for example, a study by Halima in the Amhara region grouped chickens according to local woredas (Guangua (Agew Awi), Debre-Elias (East Gojam), Gassay and Melo-Hamusit (South Gonder) and Gelila, Mecha and Tilili chickens (West Gojam)) (Halima, 2007), and a study across agro-ecological regions in Ethiopia by Dessie grouped chickens by region and 'market shed', e.g. Tilili (in the Amhara Region) was further separated into Absela and Ageza markets (2003).

Local chickens under the village system of management are characterised by high phenotypic variability (Dana, Dessie, et al., 2010; Melesse & Negesse, 2011). Across the fieldsites in Mecha and Bahir Dar Zuria, chickens were generally distinguished by colour; *qäy* (red), *näch'* (white), *t'qur* (black) and *dangilay* (red and white spotted). Other colours that were described include '*libebahar*' and '*teterma*' for white and red colour, and '*gebsoma*' – this may be translated as 'wheat coloured', 'speckled', 'wheaten strips on a black background' (Dana, Dessie, et al., 2010) or 'grayish mixture' [(Teketel, 1986) in (Tadelle Dessie, 2003)]. This is within the range of colours that Halima described in Northwest Ethiopia – with white, 'grayish mixture', red plumage making up about 60% of the population, and the remainder being black, 'multicolour', 'black with white tips', 'reddish brown' and 'white with red stripes' (2007, p. 57). *Gebsoma* and *terterma* were also identified by (Dana, Dessie, et al., 2010) who also noted '*kokima*' (white or greyish strips on brown or reddish background), or '*zigrima*' (black and white spotted feather) and *'gutya'* (crested).

More specifically Halima goes on to describe the plumage of 'Mecha chickens' as follows:

> "*The main plumage colours of both sexes are red and white with red lacing on the breast and saddle feathers. Some of the males have a black and red pattern with light red on the hackle. Others have a brownish red colour with light red on the hackle. Some of the hens have a brownish black colour with white on the hackle and tail, while others have a light golden colour on the hackle part.*" (2007)

There is also variation in size, comb type and leg colour, but of these only comb types were noted by farmers, who described chickens as either '*netela'* (single comb) or '*dereb'* (sometimes '*dimdim*', double or rose comb). This matches observations in other parts of Ethiopia by Desta and colleagues, that despite the team identifying seven different comb types (single, butter- cup, duplex, pea, rose, strawberry and walnut), farmers classified comb-shape into only two variants – single and 'the rest' (2013). The preferred characteristics for consumption for religious occasions, the only time in the year that many farmers are able to afford to eat chickens, were red, *dereb* and male, although many told me that the meat of hens was more fatty and had a better flavour.

Figure 6. Plumage colours. From L-R. Top: Local cock, with preferred 'red' colour and double comb. Local cock, with 'dangilay' colour and rose comb. Bottom: White Leghorn. Koekoek, with colouring described as 'jigara', likening it to guinea-fowl.

The 'improved' breeds are known as *ferenji* (foreign) chickens, and were usually described as 'white, foreign' which respondants suggested could be Bovans White (a Dutch White Leghorn type), or Lohmann White (from Germany), or '*jigara'* (black and white striped, Koekoek from South Africa), and people did speak about a 'red, foreign'

(possibly Bovans Red), although I didn't meet anyone who owned this type. In addition to exotic chickens bought directly from extension workers or producers, over the past few decades government and non-governmental organisations have introduced many exotic breeds into the rural populations (including White Leghorn, Rhode Island Red, New Hampshire and Cornish), leading to mixing of indigenous and exotic types, and a worry about loss of genetic diversity (Halima, 2007). In this region, chickens with featherless necks were described as *ferenji*, although the *melata* 'naked neck' type has previously been described as a local type [(Teketel, 1986) in (Dessie, 2003)], albeit at a low frequency (Dana, Dessie, et al., 2010; Desta et al., 2013).

Chickens were also identified as *ferenji* if they had a large body type or a single comb, or if they showed characteristics otherwise associated with *ferenji* chickens, such as a high rate of egg laying. Further confusion came from the idea that eggs of any type that had been hatched by *ferenji* hens were considered mixed or *ferenji*, and that eggs from *ferenji* hens that had been hatched by *habesha* chickens were considered mixed, regardless of the cock that fertilised them. Sources of knowledge about exotic breeds are often from farmer to farmer, rather than from training, leading to further confusion – one farmer told me this:

> "*..others said if ferenji chickens seem like habesha, they are mixed, but if they are really ferenji there is no hair on their neck.*" Farmer in Medamma

These examples highlight the difficulty in using the categories of 'local' and 'exotic' chickens. However, farmers' perceptions of these two categories were very

important in the use and desirability of different chickens. As such, I have continued to reproduce these categories throughout the work.

The majority of the chicken population in the area studied were *habesha*, local types. Flock sizes varied considerably, the largest being over 20 chickens, about half of which were adult hens, but most households had much fewer, with many describing recent losses of most or all of their chickens. Estimates for flock size in Ethiopia vary, with national statistics suggesting 4 (Demeke, 2008), and smaller studies suggesting 6 (Halima, 2007) – far short of estimates elsewhere in Africa for household flock sizes, which may reach nearly 100 birds (Guèye, 2003). Low productivity and high rates of loss mean that some studies have found only a third of the flock are hatched by the owners (Halima, 2007, p. 52). New birds are usually purchased at the market, or from trusted sellers, but most households consider themselves to have always had chickens in the past, even if they go for long periods without owning any. Children care for chickens in their parents houses, and when girls are married and establish their own households, they may be given chickens by their parents, or purchase their own.

Although *ferenji* chickens were seen as desirable due to their better egg production, local types were kept for a number of reasons – availability and price, disease resistance, adaptation to local environment and ability to avoid predators, foraging ability, and to meet local preferences for consumption of meat and eggs. These characteristics of local chickens have also been noted as beneficial by others (Dana, van der Waaij, et al., 2010; Dessie, 2003; Halima, 2007). Halima also found that the Mecha local breed outperformed other local breeds in weight gain when provisioned

according to intensive methods, and nearly matched the performance of Rhode Island Reds (used as a control group). When the groups were managed according to the extensive 'village' system, all groups, including the Rhode Island Reds, showed high mortality, with the Mecha group experiencing the least mortality (at approximately 50%) (2007). This high performance of the Mecha breed may be another reason for low take up of the exotic chickens introduced in this area. Reasons against keeping *ferenji* chickens included lack of availability, high price, sensitivity to disease, and high demands for care and inputs. The care of *ferenji* chickens in a village setting, as well as the extension activities undertaken to support this are considered in more detail later in the chapter.

Management of habesha chickens

The care of *habesha* chickens can be understood by the Amharic proverb 'Women and chickens rise early in the morning, but they have no-where to go". This is further developed in the chapter **[House]**. Women and chickens are tied together in the daily routines in the home, rising early, travelling only around the local area, and returning to the home before dark. It is for this reason that the responsibility for caring for the chickens falls to women, as it is expected that, like the chickens, they will be around the home for the duration of the day, unlike the men and boys who may travel further to farm, work, herd animals or trade. In some households, the children may be given, or may buy their own, chickens to take care of.

While Halima (2007) found that 80% of the chicken flocks were owned by women, and Aklilu and colleagues (2008) found that male farmers considered female-headed households as being more interested and involved in poultry keeping, I did not see a real difference in ownership between male or female headed households. When asked about responsibility for chickens, although most women said that they took care of chickens themselves, and a few mentioned that their children helped or took responsibility, many did say that their husbands helped, as they both owned them. As one older woman in Anestenya Wenz told me, '*in our culture, it is not good to have your own'.* This raises interesting questions about ownership, and sharing of benefits within households. These are discussed in more detail, with relation to the gendered aspects of chicken keeping, in [**House**].

In Anestenya Wenz, women traditionally rise before dawn, perform their ablutions in the dark, and begin their tasks for the day, such as fetching water and preparing food. As the cock crows, the day starts for everyone else in the household. The chickens exit their sleeping places inside the house, and scratch around the house or yard looking for food. When the family sits down to share *injera* (a type of flatbread traditionally made from fermented *teff*), the woman may scatter some *bekolo* (or *mashila,* maize), or other grains such as *dagusa* (finger millet), or *teff* (Eragrostis tef), on the ground inside or around the house. The chickens are called with a '*kup kup kup*', and in addition to their grains, will help themselves to any crumbs on the floor or food left unattended, usually resulting in them being chased off the basketwork

tables and out of the house. During the day, additional grains or leftover food may be provided around the time that people have midday and evening meals.

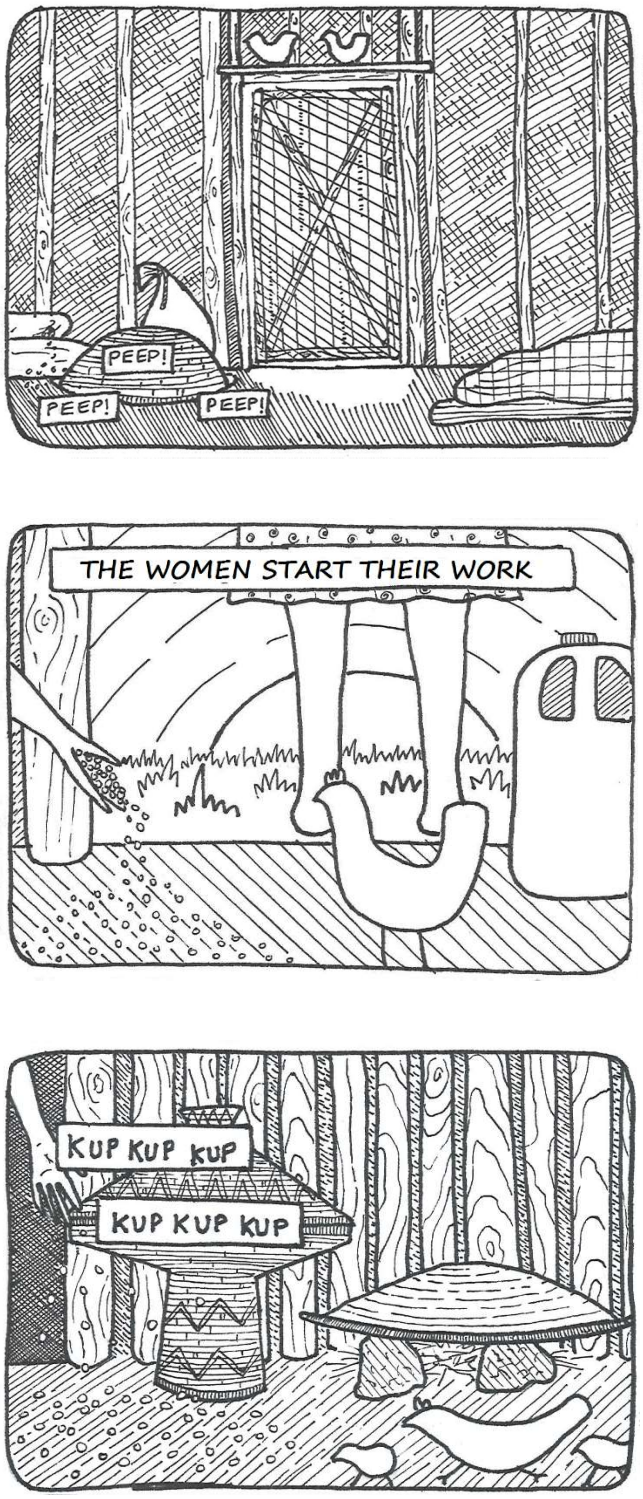


Figure 7. Illustrations: The morning.

During different seasons, the amount that the diet is supplemented may vary based on perceived availability of food, and observed activity of chickens - for example increased feeding takes place during the rainy seasons due to beliefs that they don't like to, or cannot, scavenge for food when it is wet, and also to keep them from the crops as this marks the start of planting season. Halima found during the planting season the chickens were restricted from roaming (2007, p. 35), however most fields were not adjacent to houses and the chickens did not appear to move very far away from the houses, especially as the ground is very muddy during this season. Farmers who consider it a problem often sell chickens during this period, especially as in the subsequent period there is a higher risk of predation as the crops provide cover for predators.

Water is usually provided at least once a day in a shallow container, such as plastic bowl, broken *insera* (clay pot), or section cut from a jerry can, which most people left near the door of the house, in the shade, as there is a belief that water left outside in the sun to warm up makes the chickens sick. While Halima (2007) recorded that approximately a third of households cleaned the bowl for water daily, I did not find that there was a high level of concern for this, other than about 'warm water'. One respondent did tell us she changed the water daily, but most just ensured water was always available for chickens somewhere around the house. A few households do not provide a separate drinking source for chickens, and the chickens share the wooden water trough with the other livestock.

In contrast to ideas about village chickens being 'barely supplemented', this shows a high level of care. Halima (2007) found that 99% of respondents gave supplementary

feed of whatever grains were locally available, and household waste, and provided water in plastic, wooden or clay bowls. Maize also constitutes a major aspect of supplementation in Malawi, in the form of bran, grits and whole grain (Gondwe & Wollny, 2007). Elsewhere, sorghum, millet, maize bran, broken grains and other waste products are also important sources of supplementary feed for chickens under village production systems (Abubakar et al., 2007; Riise et al., 2005).

Predation and shelter of poultry

A major problem for people who keep chickens are predators, the most significant of which are *amora* (generally translated to eagle, but can refer to any large bird of prey), and *fot* (also known by other names, such as *sululti*, but identified as a mongoose). Domestic 'y*ebet'* and wild '*yedur*' cats '*demet',* dogs '*wusha*', foxes '*kabaro*', and even scorpions '*gint*' were also identified as potential threats to poultry flocks, particularly during *kerempt*, the summer (rainy) season, when crops grew tall and it was easier for predators to hide.

A few different strategies were used to keep chickens safe from predators, the first of which was to provide some level of shelter for chickens during the night. Generally, chickens and other livestock sleep in the same room as the family. While larger livestock have dedicated corners inside the house, chickens sleep either under baskets, in niches in the '*chigot*' (the mud-built shelving units inside the house), under the bed, or on a simple wooden shelf, about 1 metre long and 50 cm wide, made of eucalyptus branches above the door, known as a '*kot'*. These are sometimes enclosed with more branches to make a cage, and built just outside the door, elevated to about 1.5 metres. Very few households had dedicated shelters for chickens, although a few

housed them with larger livestock, in separate rooms or buildings. This is in contrast to findings by Halima that 50% of households in her study areas in Ethiopia provided night shelter for chickens in separate sheds purpose-made for chickens (2007).

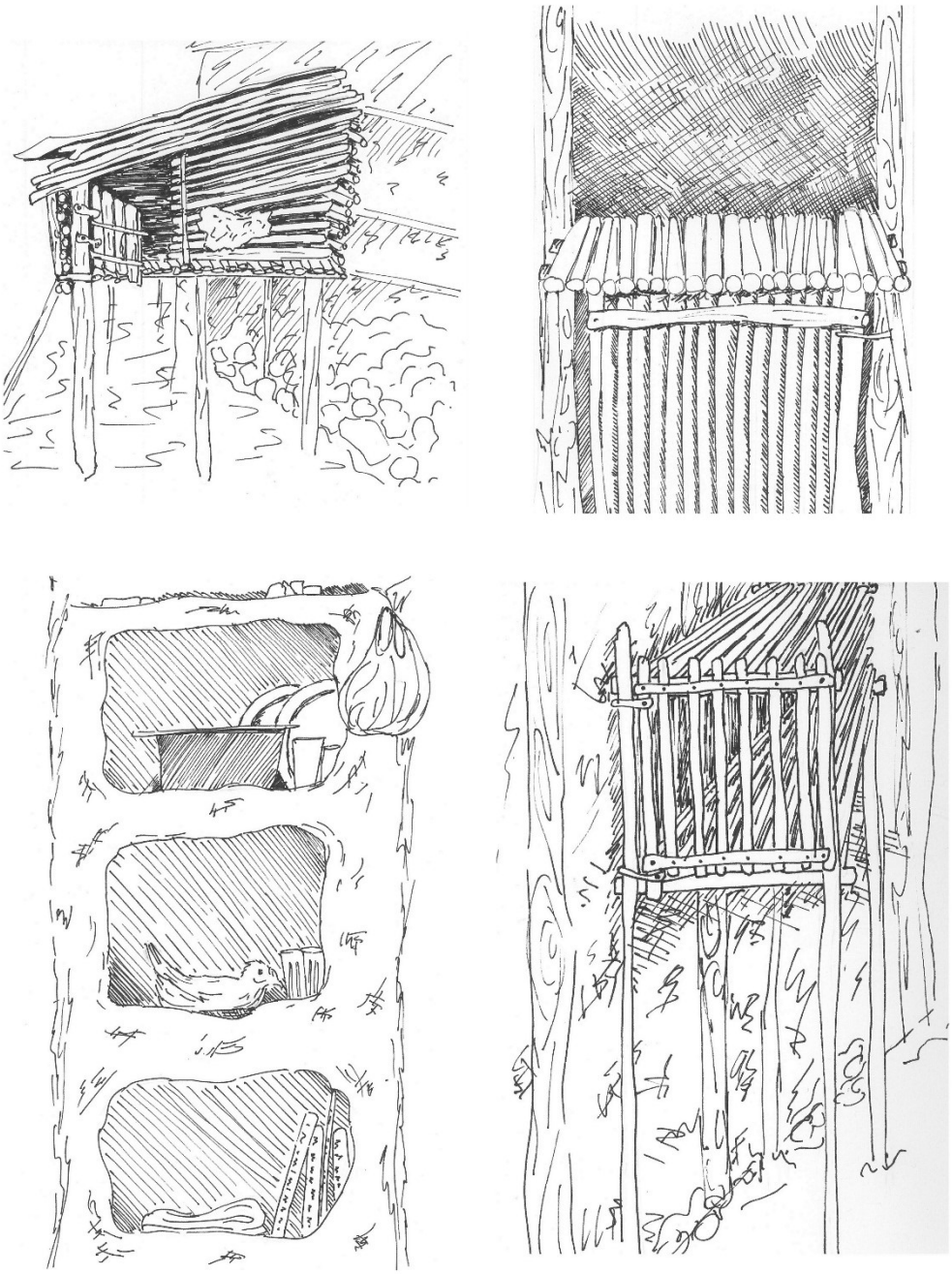


Figure 8. Chicken shelters. From L-R. Top: Free standing shelter. Shelf above front door, within house. Bottom: 'Chigot' built of the same material as the house. Enclosed 'kot' raised above ground, beside front door, outside house.

The chickens return home on their own towards the end of the day, and to 'tie' new chickens to the household, it is common practice to 'rotate' them around the central post of the *gojo* (traditional round house), or the *medija* (hearth), by holding the chickens in their arms, walking around the post. This is not done for other livestock, as they are not as independent, and do not leave the house without supervision of a household member. Chickens that have been bought for consumption may be tied with string to prevent them getting lost, and hens with young chicks are tied to something inside the house to prevent them going outside and putting the chicks in danger. Some farmers also use strips of cloth tied to long standing poles to discourage aerial predators. Houses near the road often preferred to not keep chickens as they were frequently killed by passing traffic.

Diseases affecting poultry

A more significant threat was disease, which was considered by nearly all farmers to be the biggest problem of keeping chickens. This echoes what has been said elsewhere, that 'one of the major constraints to village fowl production in Africa is undoubtedly the existence of various diseases' (Guèye, 1998). The majority of farmers in Anestenya Wenz describe only one disease, *fingal* [which may also appear in other literature as *fingel*, *finqel* or *fengele* – see also (Feleke, 2008)]. Its economic impacts can be devastating – as one woman in Korebta described the effects of losing this final form of property - '*it not only kills the chickens, it kills the human beings'.*

Some people question the label of *fingal,* saying only 'they say it is fingal, but no-one proves it', or that they don't know the name of the disease, but that others call it *fingal*. A few referred to it simply as the 'chicken disease', or equated it with *'wetete'*

- a disease that affects cattle, usually equated to 'lumpy skin disease'. Feleke (2008) found that the second most mentioned disease was lice, however people rarely mentioned this to me either as a disease or a problem, unless I asked them about how they checked the health of chickens at the market, or in a few cases, because the lice had infested their living quarters:

> '[*qinas*]...*is invisible, but it gives a hard bite.. because of this last time we had to leave the house. Last time the whole house was infected. Even manatine* (a pesticide) *did not kill it... when the cold season came, they died.'* [woman, aged 32, Korebta]

The literature around *fingal* has tended to associate it with Newcastle disease – for example Pagani & Wossene state that the only disease which people were able to name during interviews was Newcastle disease (2008). The origin of the name *fingal* is complex - an outbreak of an epidemic of 'fangal' in the human population of Ethiopia in the 1600s, has been identified as cholera (Pankhurst, 1968). Abraham, one of my assistants, suggested that the name referred to the 'sudden death' aspect of the disease, coming from the root 'fenegele' 'to overthrow', or 'to dump', and in this case meaning 'to fall down', an idea that was echoed by Betteridge (*personal communication*).

Chaka and colleagues (2012) reported that farmers considered any disease with high mortality to be *fingal*, although it is not clear whether it is the farmers', or the authors' interpretation that they consider this to be Newcastle disease (ND). Diagnosis of ND by rural veterinary providers are not usually supported with laboratory tests (Halima, 2007; Mulugeta, Kalid, & Amare, 2014), and chicken keepers

complain that the veterinarians 'don't say anything, they just give the medicine'. Thus, although a change of epidemiology in ND that has been described, from seasonal epidemics, to year-round infection (Mazengia, 2012), this may be based on false assumptions.

A range of other diseases have been proposed as contributing to the disease outbreaks described as *fingal*. They are highly variable according to strain, as well as host species and age, and in the table below I have compared the symptoms which my respondents associated with *fingal*, with the described symptoms of Newcastle Disease and other common diseases. Some signs associated with *fingal* can be seen across common poultry diseases, including diarrhoea, lethargy, problems with production, and sudden death.

Disease	Symptoms	Sources
Fingal	Sleepiness, cry*, yellow or green liquid faeces, weakness – neck and wings droop**, don't eat, sudden death, problems breathing, thin egg shells, stand in the sun (instead of the shade)	(fieldnotes)
Newcastle Disease	Sudden death, lethargy, fluffed feathers, respiratory signs, green diarrhoea, torticollis, paralysis, oedema of head and neck, decrease in egg production	(Bettridge, 2014)
Avian influenza	Sudden death, severe depression, anorexia, loss of production, respiratory signs, diarrhoea, lethargy, decreased appetite	(Bettridge, 2014)
Infectious Bursal Disease Virus (IBD, Gumboro)	Watery diarrhoea, ruffled feathers, anorexia, prostration	(Bettridge, 2014)
Marek's disease	Paralysis, lymphomas, encephalitic infection, sudden death	(Bettridge, 2014)
Pasteurella multocida (Fowl Cholera)	Fever, lethargy, mucoid secretions from the mouth, watery or greenish diarrhoea, sudden death, sinusitis, arthritis, torticollis, conjunctivitis or pharyngitis	(Bettridge, 2014)

Salmonella enterica	Early death in birds hatched from infected eggs, weakness, depression, poor appetite, ruffled feathers, pale combs, poor growth, decreased egg production, diarrhoea, dehydration	(Bettridge, 2014)
Coccidiosis	Diarrhoea, dehydration, weight loss, dysentery, mortality	(Yun, Lillehoj, & Lillehoj, 2000)

*Figure 9. Comparing symptoms of fingal and common diseases recorded in poultry * I clarified whenever they used this word, they did mean water from the eye ** Usually demonstrated by hanging the head forward, and hunching the shoulders*

This presents a particular problem when intervention work focuses on one disease – if farmers and service providers continue to associate *fingal* with only Newcastle Disease, "should any vaccination programmes for ND be implemented in future, these may not meet local people's expectations for controlling "fengele", unless this disparity is carefully explained" (Bettridge, 2014, p. 31).

Sambo (2012) found that farmers around Debre Zeit, the centre of chicken research and development in Ethiopia, were able name and describe the clinical signs for at least 9 separate diseases and syndromes, including Newcastle disease, diarrhoea, chronic respiratory disease, pasteurellosis, and fowl pox, and in semi-intensive conditions, coccidiosis, 'eye disease' and endoparasites. As with my own observations, the study also found that although ectoparasites were observed, they were not believed to be a significant cause of morbidity or mortality. In Nigeria, farmers accounts of Newcastle disease being the most significant disease affecting their chicken flocks was supported by laboratory investigations, demonstrating that village farmers have good knowledge of diseases [(Atteh, 1989) in (Guèye, 1998)]. Use of participatory epidemiology in Sudan and Kenya showed that there was a

strong agreement between pastoralists' and veterinarians' names and symptoms for different diseases (Catley, 2006). This belief was echoed by the members of the research team from EIAR, who praised the specialist knowledge of the farmers, saying that they were good observers of their own flock, 'better than us' (i.e. the research team).

However, the attitudes of local service providers towards farmers' knowledge was very different. The local vet, who was from the area, and had trained at Gondar University, described the prevalence of disease in Anestenya Wenz. The most significant was coccidiosis (caused by protozoa, and curable). Newcastle disease was the second most significant disease, but as it was viral, and it happened throughout the year, it could not be treated. A vaccine was available, but it was not possible to take it from house to house as it is heat-sensitive, and refrigeration was not always available. He claimed that the introduction of koekoeks was responsibility for the introduction of infectious coryza into local flocks. Introduction of new breeds has been suggested as responsible for the introduction of other disease in the Amhara region, including infectious bursal disease (Mazengia, Tilahun, & Negash, 2009). He also mentioned ascaris, an intestinal parasite which could be treated with deworming, but which no farmers did, as they rarely brought small animals to the clinic; salmonella; and external parasites, lice, known as '*qimal*' or '*qinqin*'. He reiterated the link between Newcastle disease and *fingal*, and said that the reason that farmers did not describe more disease types is that they do not observe their chickens closely, and wait until they are heavily infected to seek treatment. Despite this information about disease types being available locally, it did not seem to be passed on, which is supported by low figures on counselling on chicken disease and

health management (Halima, 2007), and may in part be due to the negative view of farmers that these professionals hold.

Only one respondent in AW described a second disease – *fentata*, 'something in the body (like a lump) transmitted in close proximity'. This respondent, Birtukan, was in her mid-20s, and had not only attended the recent training, but was able to make notes on it. Although a number of other women had attended the training, and a few told us that they had learnt more about how to prevent disease in their chickens (for example, by keeping new chickens from the market separately), Birtukan was the only one told us that there was more than one disease in the area.

There has been limited research to date around farmers' perception of disease transmission in crops and livestock in Ethiopia. I found that knowledge varied strongly between households and drew on different types of knowledge – as Kiros-Meles and Abang also found looking at crop diseases in Tigrai in Northern Ethiopia (2008). For example, many people believed that chickens could become ill from drinking water that had been left in the sun, but did not give further explanations of how this could happen. However, concepts recognisable from scientific explanations of disease were also present, either as a result of education or training, or individual thought. As one young male farmer told us in Korebta –

> '*I only bury the chickens, the others throw them in the forest.. [I do this] because the others [chickens] will eat the flesh… even the flies can communicate disease. No-one teaches me this... I can't read and write but I have a big heart [in Ethiopia, the heart considered to be the seat*

of thought]. I buried three of them, having done this I spared the other three – after this there is no fingal because the land keeps it.'

Others spoke of the conflict between the awareness that by throwing chicken carcasses away, other chickens would come into contact with them, and may be infected, and the cultural barriers to preventing this, such as burial. However, other forms of disease prevention did occur, such as limiting parasites through dismantling shelters and leaving them in the sun and washing with cleaning solutions such as 'ajax'.

Treatment of diseases affecting poultry

There are a huge range of traditional and spiritual ways of treating *fingal* in chickens, and although a few men spoke of being mocked for taking chickens for treatment, there is increasing interest in veterinary solutions, both preventative vaccinations and pharmaceutical treatment. The veterinary clinic in Anestenya Wenz consists of a mud built house with a cupboard full of large metal instruments, two broken chairs, and in front of the 'window' (an open hatch, closed with corrugated iron) a table with a small microscope that they used to diagnose parasitic infections of the livestock. There is no electrical supply and no running water, so anything that needs cleaning is submerged or rinsed over a bucket. The veterinarian and his assistant arrive in the morning by bus from Merawi where they both live, to a small crowd of men and adolescent boys, cattle and sheep, waiting under the eucalyptus trees that surround the edge of the compound. Over the course of the morning, the crowd grows, with people arriving from further away. The veterinarian examines and treats the livestock, while the assistant examines dung, and sells tablets, four or five folded in

small scraps of paper, through the window, for a few birr. By 10.30am (or 4.30am local time)[17], all the work is usually finished, as people have other work to achieve and arrive early. On the Christian holidays, when people are prohibited from work, the clinic is much busier.

In the mornings I spent with them, I never saw more than one woman, or chicken, per day. Although women are primarily responsible for chickens, both the journey to, and the wait at, the veterinary clinic could be long, and I more frequently saw adolescent boys clutching chickens, often for physical rather than medical problems – for example in one case, the chickens comb had grown overlarge, and was impeding its vision. A range of vaccinations do exist against Newcastle disease and Fowl typhoid, and medications are available against coccidiosis (coccidiostat), infectious coryza and E. coli (oxytetravit or oxetetracycline). However vaccination was rare, and medications could be bought over the counter at government veterinary clinics as well as private veterinary shops. Women did purchase medication, 'powder' (usually 'Caf' - chloramphenicol), although it was not necessary to take the chickens to do so. They also made decisions where to buy the medication – as one woman told me in Anestenya Wenz – '*when we buy and give the medicine from the clinic it does not work, so [we] thought maybe it has expired... so I went with [my friend] who also owns chickens, to buy it in Bahar Dar*'. A study in South Africa also showed that farmers may also prefer to use pharmacies or farmers co-operatives in the towns, rather than

[17] The Ethiopian clock starts at 6:00 a.m. standard time. The local time at midday would be described as 6:00, and 6:00 p.m. as 12:00. This makes arranging meetings tricky, as locals attempt to make it easier for you by converting to *'ferenji time',* so it is always worth checking whether your appointment is on *ferenji* time or *habesha* time. In addition, the calendar is based on the Coptic, with 12 months of 30 days, and additional month of 5 or 6 days, depending on whether it is a leap year. Thus in the Gregorian year 2015, the Ethiopian calendar year 2008 starts on September 12.

state-owned outlets, due to perceived better storage, knowledge and availability of desired medicines (Gehring, Swan, & Sykes, 2002).

While most people had tried veterinary medicine from the local clinic or from the town, a common complaint was that these were not effective. As one woman Korebta joked about the pesticide used to remove lice - "*the manatine (a type of pesticide) kills human beings, even the pest on the chat, but it does not kill that qinas!*" It was usual practice to treat the entire flock if one chicken was sick, however most of the chickens would still die, leading a few to suspect that the medicine was at fault. Many would try medicine from the clinic again, but others were not interested in using it in the future, or had been told by their neighbours that it did not work, and preferred to use locally available medicine. This is consistent with other findings in Ethiopia that although extension services play an important role in the adoption of new technologies (Spielman, Davis, Negash, & Ayele, 2011), farmers' networks, such as communication between friends and neighbours, become the main sites of social learning (Krishnan & Patnam, 2014).

A range of alternatives to veterinary management of disease are available, including plant and non-plant based medicines, and spiritual treatment. A range of materials were used for treatment of sick chickens, including some medications meant for other uses (paracetamol, amoxicillin, '*bactrime'* – a veterinary antibiotic, ampicillin, other 'headache medicine' and trachoma medication), strong food or drink (coffee, *berbere* – a local spice mix, garlic, *araqi* – the local liquor) and other household materials (*omo* – washing powder, kerosene). If not already liquid, items were made

into powder form, mixed with water and fed to chickens either alone or mixed with *injera*.

The most common plant used for treatment of chickens was '*simisa'* (possibly *Justicia schimperian*). The fresh leaves were crushed and mixed with water. This mixture could either be dropped directly into the mouth of chickens, or mixed with *injera*, and fed to the chickens. Other plants administered in this way include 'neem' (*Azadirachta indica)*, 'girawa' (*Veronica amygdalina* –from (Giday, Teklehaymanot, Animut, & Mekonnen, 2007)) and 'iret' (aloe), which were also mentioned as good treatments for fingal. Wounds can be treated with application of a paste made by crushing f*eto,* a type of black seed (from *Lepidum sativum* - garden cress - (Giday et al., 2007)) , on a grindstone, and mixing it with lemon. A general treatment may also involve fumigation with smoke from burning *bahir zaf* (eucalyptus), *tunjit* (a fragrant leaf, listed by (Giday et al., 2007) as *Otostegia integrifolia*), and *misina* (a local type of tree).

Although many people described these in depth, few said that they still used them regularly or as the sole course of treatment, saying that some plants, such as *simisa* and *grawa* were no longer easily available, or were stolen if they grew them themselves, or that these solutions didn't work anymore. Some said that they had never worked, but they had had no alternative. Now that medicine and vaccination was available at the veterinary clinic, they could use this instead. However, many women had good knowledge of these traditional methods, and reported using them alongside medicines bought at the veterinary clinic. A few told me that the medicines

provided didn't work, and that traditional medicines were better. I explore the relationship and uses of spiritual and biomedical treatments in more detail in the **[Spirits]** chapter.

Simisa (*Justicia schimperian*)

Neem (*Azadirachta indica)*

Girawa (*Veronica amygdalina*)

Tunjit *(Otostegia integrifolia*)

Iret (*Aloe sp.*)

Feto (*Lepidum sativum*)

Figure 10. Plant species used for treatment of chickens

In contrast to plant or spirit-based medicines, religious approaches to prevention and treatment of diseases were described as still important. The word '*silet*', meaning promise, was often used to describe this. People would promise that if chicks survived

to adulthood, or the flock was spared from disease, they would give one of chickens to the priests at the church. They would take *tsebel* (holy water) from the church, and administer this to the chickens by putting some in the drinking bowl early in the morning, dropping it straight into the mouth of the chickens, mixing it with *injera*, or sprinkling it over the chickens. *Tsebel* may also be mixed with *imnet* – ash from the incense at the church, which is freely distributed. Alternatively, a promise may simply be made at the *tabot* (a replica of the Ark of the Covenant, which are held in the central area of every Ethiopian Orthodox church).

Silet may also refer to other types of promises, such as those made to the *zar* or *jinn* (spirits). People promise to sacrifice a chicken to these spirits in exchange for health of their household or livestock. These behaviours are strongly condemned by the church, so few people are willing to admit to doing this themselves, although many say that their neighbours do it. We met some people who had travelled over 80 kilometres to carry out *silet* to *Ghion,* the spirit of the *Abay* (Nile), in order that their local priests would not find out. These aspects of medicine are considered in more depth in **[Spirits]** chapter.

Other practices are carried out for protection of chickens, especially newly-hatched chicks. Eggshells are placed onto a porcupine quill (or a wooden stick now, as the quills are more difficult to find), and then placed on the outside of the house. Most people were not sure what this practice was called, or the origin or meaning of it – it was something that had been passed on from their parents. Another was the use of *tunjit* leaves, which were dried, and placed on the fire. The newly hatched chicks were then held in a *wonfit* (sieve) in the smoke. Fumigation was described as having

protective power for chicks, but also for human newborns and their mothers. Melesse and colleagues found that it was used to protect against Newcastle disease, although noted that it would also warm and dry the newly hatched chicks, as well as remove external parasites that may have been transmitted from the hen or incubation materials (2013). This practices was not performed for other animals, although no-one could confidently tell me why. A few farmers suggested that it was because the main disease of cows, *wetete*, could be treated by modern medicine, but that the main disease of chickens could not.

Reproducing chickens

While a number of reasons were given for keeping chickens, the majority were for production for consumption and sale of both chickens and eggs. However, there was little evidence of detailed breeding practices to gain popular physical, behavioural or physiological traits. Other studies have found no systematic mating practices in any regions of Ethiopia (Dana, van der Waaij, et al., 2010; Desta et al., 2013). Households with only hens were happy for the eggs to be fertilised by neighbours' *ferenji* cockerels, as this allowed them to gained mixed chickens without any additional investment. Eggs for consumption were collected and stored in baskets or boxes filled with straw inside the house until enough were collected to take to market, or were sold to local businesses, or cooked for the children. Eggs for hatching were placed on straw in a basket, and the hens with them, then kept in a dark part of the house, such as under the bed or in storage areas. Halima (2007) found a relatively high number of chicks hatched per clutch, although some farmers did complain to me that it wasn't enough, and wanted to know how they could improve yield to 100%. In addition,

survival rates into market age were quite low, due to the risks of disease and predation – Melesse and colleagues (2013) found a survival rate of only 58%.

Selective breeding practices within indigenous species are uncommon in Ethiopia, not only in chickens (Dana, van der Waaij, et al., 2010; Desta et al., 2013), but also in sheep (Getachew et al., 2010) and cattle (Tegegne et al., 2009). However, there is growing interest in cross-breeding with improved breeds for sheep (Gizaw, Tegegne, Gebremedhin, & Hoekstra, 2010) and cattle (Tangka, Emerson, & Jabbar, 2002; Tegegne et al., 2009), and although farmers express a positive attitude towards mixed chickens, their strategies for achieving this are likely to be unsuccessful. For example - one respondent, a young woman in Anestenya Wenz who made and sold *tälla*, told us that she wanted *ferenji* chickens because they were better for eggs. Her plan was to buy *ferenji* eggs, and get a *habesha* hen to hatch them, so that she would get 'mixed' chickens, with habesha (behavioural) traits, but ferenji egg-laying characteristics. Other studies in Ethiopia have also found that breeding objectives and practice, were unusual, and based on easily identifiable characteristics, such as egg production and looks (Addisu, Hailu, & Zewdu, 2013).

In seasons that were considered bad for chicks, such as when it was too hot, too rainy, or a high predation risk, hens were discouraged from being broody by taking away the eggs, or leaving the hens with friends or relatives living in another place, to distract them from this pattern of behaviour. Elsewhere in Ethiopia, broody behaviour may be left to stop naturally, or modified by hanging the hens upside-down (Dana, van der Waaij, et al., 2010).

If replacement stock was needed, such as because of low productivity of chickens, or loss of the flock from disease, they would usually be purchased in the market. A few might receive chickens as gifts from relatives, but I did not observe the practice of poultry sharing, where one (usually poorer) household cared for and accrued the benefits (e.g. sale of eggs), of poultry belonging to another household, as described by Aklilu and colleagues (2008). This may have been due to the relatively smaller flock sizes in Amhara, as compared to their study site in Tigray. Generally, women would discuss the matter with their husbands, and then buy the chickens alone, although a few said that they had never bought chickens, it was their husbands responsibility to make these purchases. There was not a way in which to identify productive hens, so people prefer to buy offspring of known productive hens from neighbours or relatives, or from trusted persons in the market. As one women told us – '*I see the chickens and I already know if they are productive or not, because I have seen them at my neighbours or relatives'*.

However, when local flocks are affected by disease, or if there are no good quality chickens available, famers would purchase chickens in the market. They usually bought these from other farmers, rather than from traders '*because traders buy from farmers, so when they sell to us they add some money*'. Birds for production were chosen according to local preferences for colour and form, such as having red colouration, a double comb, and red legs. Other studies have also shown that birds are selected according to traits that can be directly observed (Dana, van der Waaij, et al., 2010). Female birds who have not yet, or recently commenced laying are preferred, to maximise the time in which they lay, and this point is determined by the

weight of the chicken, or by the chicken having 'a red face', meaning that she is ready to lay.

As disease is such a significant factor in the keeping of chickens, checking the health of chickens prior to purchase is important. This may be done by visual inspection, such as ensuring the comb is red in colour, and feathers are healthy, without discolouration or pests. The responses of chickens to particular stimuli is also checked, such as tapping the back of the chicken to produce a characteristic sound, and by trying to grab the beak. Failure of exotic chickens to move or back away when people attempt to catch them is a further reason for the dislike of these chickens.

Sellings chickens

As chickens are important economic tool in rural households, I discuss the sale of chickens here. Who sells them, and who benefits from the sale of chickens, is discussed in more detail in **[House]**, which considers the relationship between women, chicken and the household. Marketing of agricultural produce is a major concern, for poultry and other produce, and was mentioned by both extensive and intensive poultry producers as being a significant constraint. As some farmers told me in Anestenya Wenz, advice was given on the use of fertiliser to increase productivity of crops, but they were not given advice about the market – hence this investment would not see a return. In the case of chickens, ''the market for chickens is poor, even if we try our best we only get 70 birr for a chicken''[18]. The issues of marketing of poultry in Ethiopia is well described, focussing on poor infrastructure, lack of market information, and unhygienic selling spaces (Aklilu et al., 2007; Ehui,

[18] At the time of the fieldwork, 20 Ethiopian birr was roughly equivalent to $1 US.

Benin, & Paulos, 2003; Meseret, 2010), and from the perspective of risk of avian influenza and other diseases (Alemu et al., 2008; Ayele & Rich, 2010; Vallée et al., 2013).

Women often reported that they sold chickens and eggs themselves, or their sons and daughters did on their behalf. In the market, this is borne out, as the area for buying chickens and eggs usually contains a number of women, young girls and teenage boys. In Anestenya Wenz, women preferred not to travel far to the market, and chose to sell mostly in Wetet Abay, the nearest small market, rather than the town market in Merawi, as it could be reached easily on foot or cheaply by bajaj (autorickshaw). They rarely travelled as far as Bahir Dar, and the only female farmers selling chickens in Bahir Dar were those who lived nearer to the city than any other significant market. However, those from villages further from the main road would walk up to four hours to reach a market. Women would often be selling crops and buying produce in the same trip to the market, and may have travelled with their husband or children, in order to them to also accomplish their own tasks, or to better sell their produce as a household. The young boys were more likely to have travelled a long distance, and to be selling only chickens, rather than a mix of produce. To take advantage of the better prices in Bahir Dar market, they may have made journeys of a few hours by minibus. Findings in other countries show that rural producers rarely sell in urban markets themselves, and that the middlemen are more likely to benefit from these differences in price, e.g. Benin (Sodjinou, 2011), Tanzania (Mlozi, Kakengi, Minga, Mtambo, & Olsen, 2003), Malawi (Gondwe, Wollny, & Kaumbata, 2005), and Kenya (Bett, Peter, & Bokelmann, 2011).

Halima (2007) mentions chickens being taken to market 1-2 times a week – while they are certainly available for purchase in the market at that frequency, most women spoke of selling chickens only a few times in a year – either around holidays when the price was good, when they had a large flock, or when they needed the money. These changes in demand for chickens had a significant impact on the price of chickens and eggs in the market, and farmers tried to take advantage of this to sell at the most profitable time.

> '*Before the holidays come, 3-4 days before, the price is increased, we sell on that day'.* Woman in her 40s, in Anestenya Wenz

> '*In Fasika and Yohanes the price is expensive, everyone needs chickens, everyone is trying to buy.. even poor people buy at that time. The rest of the time, other holidays or not holidays, the price is cheap. There are many buyers, but no chickens. The female is 80 birr, and male 100, when it is expensive. When it is cheap, the female is 60 birr, and the male 70 – 80 birr'.* Older woman, lives alone in Anestenya Wenz

They might even attempt to maximise their profits, by agreeing prices between them, and refusing to sell chickens until late on the eve of a holiday –as one farmer told us '*if one cockerel is particularly in demand, it may even drive the price up… towards the end of the day, if people are desperate to get rid of chickens, the price might decrease... but if [there is a deadline] like the eve of a holiday, the price might increase to take advantage of demand*'.

Other major influences on the price of chickens in the market are the impacts of disease, and the periods in the year in which farmers would prefer not to keep

chickens. As one woman in Anestenya Wenz explained - '*if more chickens are available in the market, the price is cheap, the reverse is also true… when the disease comes around there is no more chickens in the market..'.* She went on to joke - '*it* [the disease] *comes at different times, if we know when the disease comes, we sell all the chickens before!'* Others associated the disease with particular periods in the year, such as the hot periods at the end of the short and long rainy seasons. Others thought that the wet conditions, and increased vegetation for predators to hide in, during *kerempt*, the summer rainy season, was not good for hatching chicks, and would sell eggs during this period. During this season, '*the price is cheap because it is ploughing time, everyone wants to sell chickens because they try to eat the seeds..*', however, at the end of planting people report the price going up '*after the end of this fasting, price is expensive because farmers finish work, and want to keep chickens, but there are few chickens and lots of buyers, so the price is expensive'*. The price change during this period was described as doubling, from 50 to 100 birr. Other studies in Ethiopia have also shown that disease outbreak, seasonality and holidays are important factors in price variations (Aklilu et al., 2007; Meseret, 2010).

The examples above demonstrate how there is a great deal of knowledge about the changing prices in the local markets. This information is frequently exchanged between women, in my household my host family would regularly report the increasing prices of goods, especially that of sugar. Information is used to determine prices to sell chickens to neighbours, and as part of decisions of when and where to buy and sell items. '*When I need to buy something different that is not available in Wetet Abay, I sell chickens in Merawi. There is everything in both [markets], but some cheap and some expensive. When we want to buy clothes, it is better to go to Merawi,*

but for onions it is better to go to Wetet Abay' [woman in her 40s, in Anestenya Wenz]. Prices can be very sensitive to change on particular days, as one boy describes '*[on the way to the market] we discuss [the prices] with each other, and when we see lots of chickens available in the market, we lower the price.'*

Traders are recognised by farmers as a major buyer of chickens, as these two examples demonstrate:

> '*I sell most of the time to traders.. if I have 4 or 5 chickens, he takes them all – the consumers take only one.. if the trader gets a good chicken, he gives more money'* – Woman in her 40s, Anestenya Wenz
>
> *'Most of the time I sell to traders, because they buy on the road and if you have a good chicken they give you a better price'*- Woman in her 50s, Anestenya Wenz

As most farmers will also be selling other produce on the same day, traders buying all of their chickens at once, or buying them before they go to the market, speeds up their tasks for the morning. However, some farmers may choose to take advantage of the better prices in town themselves.

Urban populations in Ethiopia consume a greater amount of meat, attributable to a greater income, and a reported reduced interest in fasting and other religious or cultural restrictions on meat consumption. Rural inhabitants often claimed that urban people no longer carried on traditional practices, and this was reflected in their choices of chicken – '*in town, mostly the price is related to weight, in rural area, people give more consideration to its colours..*'. This echoes the findings of Aklilu and colleagues in Tigray, Ethiopia, where the farmers "described the urbanites as self-

centred, non-fasting and rich people, whereas rural people are strictly religious and poor, and consume poultry only rarely" (2008, p. 179). In the larger markets, farmers and traders may be able to sell within the Christian fasting periods, by selling to Muslim consumers, who do not have restrictions on which part of the year they eat meat and eggs.

There are slightly different scales of trading activity. Some people may take advantage of low prices to buy chickens to keep for the short-term at home (1-2 weeks) and sell when the prices are better, as a supplement to their usual income. Others may buy large numbers regularly from rural markets, and sell them in Bahir Dar, from permanent stalls which they rent. Farmers recognise that traders want to buy the chickens that will appeal most to consumers – '*I sell to consumers because traders prefer red, dereb and male, and I don't always have this to sell*', but the consumers would prefer to buy these chickens directly from the farmers themselves.

> '*if there are farmers in the market, I prefer to buy from farmers. For one, the price is good, and second, the health of the chickens is good – they have good weight because they can eat any time, and the taste is also better. Traders just keep the chickens in their home until they sell*'
>
> - Woman in Merawi

Colour emerges as an important factor in the desirability and price of different chickens, due to its spiritual use. Here, the most significant colour is red, and this will be explored in further detail in both the **[Spirit]** and **[Food]** chapters. Elsewhere, premium prices are also related to both specific uses and availability. For example, in Benin, Sodjinou (2011) found that both chickens with white and black plumage were

sacrificed to particular voodoo gods, but that the white chickens commanded the highest price, as black coloured chickens were widely available.

Figure 11. Illustrations. Chickens to market.

Care of ferenji chickens and extension activities

In this final section, I consider the care of '*ferenji*' chickens in extensive settings. This level of care given to *habesha* chickens was considered to be not taxing, although many women wished to have more substantial shelters, but their husbands had not yet built it. One of the reasons given against keeping the more productive *ferenji*

chickens was that they required a much higher level of investment, such as building dedicated shelters, and specialist food. In addition, they were considered 'weak', having a higher susceptibility to diseases. The organisations responsible for breeding and distributing these improved breeds are still working on producing chickens that respond as well to the natural environment, including improving local breeds (Dessie & Mwai, 2013).

The ownership and care of *ferenji* chickens is strongly tied to government extension activities. A number of extension programmes have been launched in Ethiopia, each attempting to address the shortcomings of its predecessor, these include comprehensive package projects such as Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit, the Peasant Agriculture Development Extension Program, and the Participatory Demonstration and Training Extension System (PADETES) (Wale & Yalew, 2007). This last system was the one that farmers most often described, calling it the '*and le amist*' (One-five) programme, in which one model farmer accepts new technology, and four others learn from them, through discussion over a coffee ceremony. Haile and Maryam were a friendly couple in their thirties in Anestenya Wenz, who had been immediately suggested to me by the extension agents as 'model farmers'. Both acted as the 'one' in their One-five groups, and they described the range of topics that had been covered in the past, including HIV/Aids, wearing and washing of clothes, health in pregnancy, family planning, financial savings, and forestry.

Since the start of the extension programme in Ethiopia in 1953, poultry breeds such as Rhode Island Red and White Leghorn have been distributed to rural poultry producers to improve the egg and meat production in Ethiopia (Wondmeneh et al.,

2015). Although Wondmeneh and colleagues (2015) state 'that there is no documented evidence how exotic breeds were chosen by the public extension body or whether the choice was supported by the studies of adaptability of the breeds under local conditions', there are some studies from the 1980s and 1990s that show that the White Leghorn was rated better than Brown Leghorn, Rhode Island Red, New Hampshire, Light Sussex and Barred Rock, in terms of egg production, adaptability, disease resistance and efficiency (Yami, 1995). While Halima spoke of the difficulty of finding 'indigenous' or 'typical' systems in north west Ethiopia (2007, p. 30), and with colleagues identified dilution of the indigenous genetic stock, by 'extensive and random distribution of exotic chicken breeds by both governmental and non-governmental organisations' (Halima et al., 2007), improved or hybrid breeds still constitute less than 5% of the national flock (CSA, 2015).

The limiting factors in adoption of improved chicken breeds have been identified as lack of extension follow-up, lack of complementary inputs, diseases, unavailability of credit services, and market problems (Teklewold et al., 2006). There remains some discomfort in the relationship between farmers and the rural authorities in Ethiopia, due to the historical association between local extension agents and the Marxist Derg regime (Pausewang, 2002, 88), and some have argued that the agricultural extension scheme continues to facilitate uncontested control of public space and the electorate (Berhanu & Poulton, 2014). In addition, supposedly farmer-centred organisations, such as co-operatives, are often led by EPRDF party members (Mogues et al., 2009, p. 33). The high level of state control not only affects political decision-making, but also access to donor funding, food aid distribution, control of the 'private sector', and until recently, domination of ideas and information (Bevan & Pankhurst, 2007). As

extension agents continue to be involved in non-extension activities such as collecting taxes and loan repayments, people continue to consider their function as government spokesmen, rather than to contribute to rural development (Belay, 2003). In addition, extension agents have been criticised for failure to attain empowerment of farmers, one of the key objectives of PADETES, choosing to work more closely with middle income farmers, and paying little attention to those who do not participate in extension activities (Belay & Abebaw, 2004).

While some farmers, such as Haile and Maryam, were on good terms with the extension agents, this feeling was not universal. Some farmers did tell me that they had used the information they gained to help provide better care for their own chickens, but others made a range of complaints about the extension services that were offered, which I have broadly grouped into – lack of 'fitness', no follow-up, and inappropriate distribution of services. A lack of 'fitness' has been identified as the major factor limiting technology adoption in Ethiopia, for example that the farmers' practice is equal to, or better than, the technology, or that that technology costs too much (Wale & Yalew, 2007). I observed some simple and clever 'fixes' involving plastic water bottles, for example, to sow fine seeds more evenly, a hole was punched in the cap which allowed only a few to fall out, making row-planting much easier, in contrast to a project that I was told about, in which a US university had invested half a million dollars to develop a machine that could do the same thing, but when tested in the field, it was not able to handle the soil conditions.

A lack of fitness can refer here to the information communicated by extension agents, which were described as too simplistic, for example farmers were only told that

exotic chickens are beneficial, but guidance was not provided on topics that farmers wanted to know about, such as protection from and cure of disease, how to improve hatching yields and marketing. It also refers to the supplementary services provided, such as the perception that the medication provided did not work. However, the most significant lack of fitness is the provision of the poultry, not only that they were considered too expensive, and were provided in a male to female ratio that farmers were not interested in, but that the chickens themselves were considered to be inappropriate.

The chickens were perceived as being more sensitive to disease, and their light colour made them more of a target for predation. They were also considered 'stupid' for not being able to respond appropriately to predation threats by running away or hiding. It was particularly interesting that the words used to describe *ferenji* and *habesha* chickens echoed their opinions of foreigners, especially of foreigners being weak. In addition, the colours used to describe these kinds of chickens were also used for the colours of *ferenji* and *habesha* people – white and red respectively. People in this region do not consider themselves to be black, but red, or colours close to that, and are often considered to be racist towards the darker-skinned inhabitants of the lowlands (Finneran, 2013). This echoes White (2011) who described 'chickens of Whiteness' (battery chickens, foolish, fake or artificial fowl) and 'chickens of Zuluness' (free range domestic fowl, "chickens of the people") in South Africa.

While the high growth rate of improved breeds has been suggested as a potential means of improving protein consumption, most rural inhabitants said that they were not interested in using these birds for meat at all, and while urban inhabitants would

eat the meat of *ferenji* chickens in restaurants and hotels, in western-influenced dishes, they also preferred the meat of village chickens for traditional food – as one told me 'they are not chickens, they are just birds'. Part of the reason for these preferences was that *habesha* meat was tastier, as they were older and had eaten a more varied diet. Most farmers would only be able to afford to eat chickens on special occasions, when they would be prepared as *doro wot*, a kind of spicy stew (given its due attention in **[Food]**), and the meat of *ferenji* chickens would 'melt' during the long cooking time of this dish.

Habesha eggs are also considered to be tastier – the yolk is a darker colour and is perceived to have a better taste. The preference for darker yolk colours is not limited to Ethiopia, as it is associated with a plant-rich diet (Hasin, Ferdaus, Islam, Uddin, & Islam, 2006) and there is considerable research into mimicking this effect in industry through use of a number of dietary supplements, such as algae (Gouveia et al., 1996), marigold and orange skins (Hasin et al., 2006), red chilli or peppers (Gurbuz, Yasar, & Karaman, 2003). As *ferenji* chickens are not encouraged to scavenge, they will not lay eggs that match the colour of *habesha* chickens. Dana et al., (2010) found that this led to a lower market preferred for eggs from exotic chickens, although I did not observe a significant difference in price in rural areas. While the taste of *habesha* eggs is preferred, many use the *ferenji* eggs to feed their children, usually in the form of *firfir* (scrambled) eggs, in which the flavour is partially masked with onions and berbere. The high productivity of *ferenji* eggs was also prized as it meant women could sell eggs in the market more regularly. Traders would appear at rural markets and fill large boxes with eggs, which would be sold from huge, precariously balanced baskets in Bahir Dar market, or sold directly to the hotels.

Despite these issues, many farmers have chosen to try exotic chickens or hope to buy some in the future. Some buy the koekoeks that were provided by the bureau of agriculture office in Merawi, whilst others bought the *ferenji* chickens that were raised locally, by a young man named Besrat. Originally from Anestenya Wenz, he had moved to Addis Ababa to work, but returned a few years ago to Anestenya Wenz to farm his parents land. It is far from the irrigation site, and despite attempting a mixed strategy of grains, vegetables and eucalyptus, it had not been profitable, and had started his own semi-intensive chicken farm in Anestenya Wenz. People were not keen on buying ferenji chickens from unknown sources, for the same reasons as when buying replacement stock, although a number did say that they would buy them if they were available in the local market.

There is an awareness that *ferenji* chickens need more and specific care, and for many people it is this, rather than the high cost, that delays their decision to purchase them. The reduced demand for intensive management, and better adaptation to local environment has also been recognised as a key reason for preferences of indigenous plant species (Kiros-Meles & Abang, 2008; Wale & Yalew, 2007). In Anestenya Wenz, one of the key constraints in providing this specialised care, was that the houses based along the road were often rented, and so those who might be considered to potentially benefit the most from keeping smaller livestock, such as poultry, were unable to build chicken shelters. However, some were able to rent sheds and stores, and start this business, such as Birtukan, who had explained to us the details of diseases. She also told us of the specific feed needs – a regular diet of maize flour, wheat and barley, supplemented with 'flour of blood and bone, vegetables and grass'. This had to be purchased in Bahir Dar, requiring an unusual trip for many of

the female farmers I spoke to. The feeds are not currently sold in the markets at Wetet Abay or Merawi, and so most people are not able to provide them. If the exotic chickens were kept separately, they were not allowed to scavenge. *Ferenji* chickens that were kept with the *habesha* chickens would not scavenge or eat a range of foods, and people generally supplied them with a diet of mixed grains (maize four, wheat and barley).

Other complaints about the programme was a lack of follow-up, such as attending training, but exotic chickens were not provided. When chickens were provided, people often complained that extension agents gave or sold them to their family or friends first, meaning there is either none left, or the remaining chickens are sold at higher prices. Selection of model farmers may also be based on favouritism or political considerations (M. J. Cohen & Lemma, 2014; Lemma & Hoffman, 2005). I return to this issue of cronyism and access to services in the penultimate chapter, **[Intensive]**.

House

'As we walk up to the homestead, two huge dogs run out towards us, and one jumps for Hiwot, getting a good bite of her bag. Having seen others chased off by the dogs before, I come prepared with a long heavy stick, which I use to hold them off, while Hiwot tries to hide behind me. Fortunately, Maryam hears the commotion and comes running out, throwing stones and shouting, until they run off behind the house. We laugh off the encounter, and follow her past the cattle tied under the tree, into the house, where it is thankfully dark and cool. As it is the hottest part of the day, Haile has come inside to rest, and is sitting, holding their youngest, a cheerful little boy, who he entertains by throwing a tomato. Their eight-year daughter is old enough to help her mother, and fetches firewood for the little stove. Maryam notices me looking at the cat tied up inside, and tells me it is because he otherwise tries to hunt the chicks. While her daughter fans the fire under the kettle, Maryam chases out the chickens

who are hopping over the mosquito-net covered sacks of grain, with a gentle admonition of 'nish!'.'

What struck me from my visit to Haile and Maryam's household one morning, is how women's lives occur in a shared space with the smaller animals within the household. Livestock form an important part of a household in rural Amhara - as source of income, labour and food. They also have an important physical role in the household. Many people live in single rooms – the livestock must sleep in the same room as them. As a guest, I was often guided to sit away from the door (a place which I preferred as it gave me more light to write with), as that was where the animals slept, and the place was seen as unclean. Chickens slept either under baskets under the bed, or in a *kot*, which referred to a wooden-built structure – either a shelf above the door, or a dedicated hutch on stilts outside the house. During the day, other livestock were herded to grazing areas, but chickens are free to roam. Whilst I occasionally spotted them in the eucalyptus plantations, they were mostly found inside the house itself, or within calling distance, pecking at the ground in the homestead or just beyond the fences. When women called them with a '*kup kup kup*' they would come running, knowing that food would be made available.

Both the activities of women, and the language that is used to describe them, links women and chickens, more so than any other animal, to the house. In **[Extensive]** I discussed briefly how chickens are associated with the home and women through domestic chores, and in **[Intensive]** I explore how this relationship might shift in commercial production. In this chapter, I will explore how, just as the chickens are

seen as economic tools, they may also represent relationships between women, the household, and the relationships between the two, through practice, ritual and speech.

The house

I begin by describing the house, and household, as I have used these terms in my own research. In his research among the Amhara in the Eastern Gojjam region of Ethiopia in the 1960s and 1970s, Allan Hoben (1973) describes the residences as being low thatched, circular structures, with an inner area for living, sleeping and the hearth, and an outer circle for storage and sheltering livestock. In an earlier study, Levine (1965) describes small separate structures built of wattle, capped with conical thatched roofs. These round traditional buildings are known as '*gojo*' or '*tukul*', and while Reminick (1973) found that poor rural households used circular structures, and the larger villages and towns tended towards the square structures, they no longer form part of the main household in this area of West Gojjam or in the villages in Bahir Dar Zuria. In my time in this area, the only residential areas where the '*gojo*'s are used for housing, are for the student priests, within the grounds of the church.

In Anestenya Wenz, there were a few compounds which contain one round structure, used for cooking and storage. The main buildings were rectangular, some built as very simple huts, or a terraced row of long rooms that serve as individual residences on the main road, and some built in the modern style. The 'modern style' comprises of a square base, with a porch area in front, and is separated inside into a long main room, with a built in step running around it, used as seating area in the day, a sleeping

area at night, and storage. In this room daily life takes place, including tasks that are done publicly, such as preparing coffee, and cooking. The second space can be used for storage, as a private bedroom, or for housing the animals, depending on the needs of the household. All the houses were built of traditional materials of wood, straw, and mud. The wooden frame is made of stripped eucalyptus trunks, driven into the ground, and then horizontal supports are hammered in. Roofing of all the houses was corrugated iron – only the few round *gojo*s were thatched. Sometimes men would work on building with friends or close relatives, and some men did this professionally.

During my first few weeks in Anestenya Wenz with Hiwot, we met Mulugeta, who was visiting one of the families I had become familiar with. I asked them about a house that was being built alongside the path nearby, and he told me that it was his sister's house. He had wanted her to live nearby so he had organised the building of the house. Later in the day, we passed the site again, and a group of around 12 men were taking shelter under the shade of a large tree, resting and eating their lunch, *shïro* (a chickpea-flour based stew) and *injera,* and drinking *tälla.* They invited us to join them, enthusiastically telling me that a number of things were culture, '*bal*' – from helping neighbours build houses, to forcing each other to eat and drink more, and trying to encourage me to drink *araqi* on the same grounds. While they rested another 10 or so men were adding the horizontal posts, and they told us the house would be finished in two days – indeed, when we passed through this area two days later, the walls were nearly covered with mud and straw, although the roof was not on yet. As with other work groups, such as for harvesting, it is the responsibility of the organiser to provide food and drink for the working group.

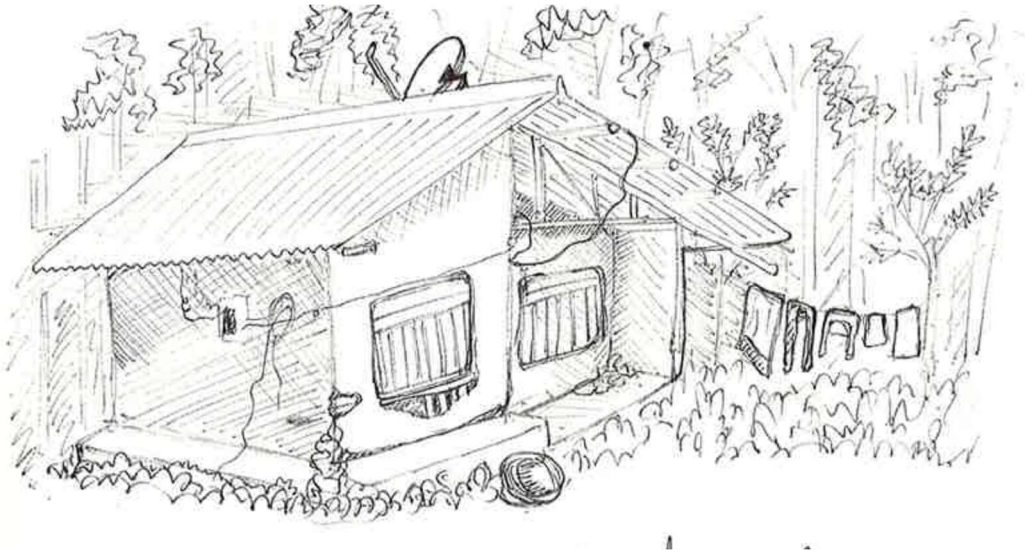


Figure 12. Field sketch of modern house style

It is the women's responsibility to fill the frame with a mixture of straw and mud. Finishing the house is a long process, in which eventually the wood is completely covered inside and outside the house with wattle, and maybe a pattern made, or the house painted. Some finish the interior walls with newspapers, and hang traditional basket work, animals skins, posters of Bollywood actors or 'traditional' Ethiopian scenes (models with expensive weaves and intricate braids, posing as if caught in the act of pouring coffee), inspirational quotes or 'congratulations' banners printed on A4 paper, and bouquets of plastic flowers. Wealthier households can afford to cover the ceiling and walls in brightly coloured woven plastic, and some had vinyl covering the compacted earth floors. Once the seating shelves were well-covered, plastic sewn into long narrow shapes, and stuffed with straw, were used for seating comfort, and also as sleeping mattresses on the floor. If these weren't available, sacks or animals skins were provided. The wealthier houses had some locally-made wooden furniture – chairs, coffee tables, even cabinets of prized kitchenware. The poorer houses had

storage built of the same material as the houses, in a number of styles, from walls filled with different sized niches, to mid-height room dividers, or as shelves next to the front door. A mud-built cabinet is known as an '*chigot*' or '*armadiyun*' (from the Italian '*armadio'* meaning wardrobe), and instructions for building these had been provided through the teaching of the '*And le Amist*' (One-five) farmers associations. Most houses had one simple bed, made from eucalyptus frames, with strips of leather tied across to provide a lattice of support, and straw-filled mattresses on top. All the houses in the area had been provided with the same pastel blue mosquito netting, and most hung these above the main beds.

Nearer the road, people tended to live in rented accommodation, one of the single-roomed dwellings in the terraces, with a small area of communal front and rear outside space. Away from the road, people lived in fenced compounds containing a single household, or clusters of houses, usually in family groups. Most people told us that women moved to live with their husbands and their families, which follows earlier observations in the area (Levine, 1965). However, we spoke to a number of families in which the husbands had moved into the compounds of their wife's families. Part of the reason that men had chosen to move away from their own family grounds, was the lack of available land, due to land reform and fragmentation of available plots due to inheritance laws. The complexities of land rights will be briefly discussed in **[Intensive]**, due to their impact on commercial production and peri-urban livelihood choices, and here I focus only on access to land in rural areas for women. Prior to the Derg reform, women had some degree of access, however the conditions of land rights under the reform meant women could only access land

rights through marriage (Adenew & Abdi, 2005; Teklu, 2005). Although women ostensibly regained rights after the EPRDF took power, and later through the Land Use and Administration Proclamation in 2000, there has been a failure to integrate women into the process (Teklu, 2005). Despite the changes in land law, in many places, land has not been redistributed since allocation in 1975, leading to a class of young men who are landless, and therefore dependent on their parents (Bevan & Pankhurst, 2007), or land has been distributed only the oldest son in the family, and not to any women (Freeman, 2002).

Within the compound might be anything from single-room dwellings, to a complex of buildings, consisting of a main modern style 'big' house, housing the family heads, smaller residences, and outhouses for keeping livestock and storage of grain. Not all the houses were purely residential. Especially nearer to the road, women would use the living area to sell home-made beer (*tälla*), liquor (*araqi*), as well as coffee (*buna*), tea (*shay*), snacks of maize or spicy beans, and sometimes meals. Most of this was done on an informal basis, the presence of *tälla* advertised by a can upended on a stick outside the house. One pair of enterprising young women who lived next door to each other, had set up a system where they alternated who was open for business – this meant that they did not have to compete directly, and had time to do their other chores, go to the market, brew their beer, and visit other friends and neighbours. There were more formal '*shay bet*', tea houses, which were run by men as often as women, and these sometimes contained plastic seating, as well as an outdoor area with locally-made wooden furniture.

I have used the term 'household' here to mean people residing together in one house. Whilst Hoben uses the Amharic term *'beteseb*' in its literal sense of 'house of people' or 'people of the house' to define a group of people who live in a single homestead, and who are not necessarily related (1973, p. 43), I found that the term '*beteseb*' could equally be applied to 'family'. As such, an elderly woman interviewed alone in her house, would include her children as '*beteseb'*, although they are married and live elsewhere. Weissleder (1965) argues that using the term *beteseb* is also misleading as the household is not just the human members, but also includes the land – it is a prerequisite to household-forming. However, I found that renting and non-farming work was quite common, even in rural areas, so for my purposes, even this is a poor description. Elsewhere in Ethiopia, Bevan and Pankhurst (2007) found that households without middle-aged members (i.e. that consisted of young or old people) were not considered proper households due to their inability to access labour – however, non-relatives or relatives could join the household as sharecroppers, thus creating a fully functional household. I would also argue that members of the family who did not reside in the house could also participate in and contribute to the household.

It was not uncommon for students completing secondary school to live outside of the home closer to the school, although the long school vacation is over the 'summer' months of the rainy season, allowing them to continue work on the family farms (Admassie, 2003). While the rate of enrolment in tertiary education is still relatively low in Ethiopia, and shows significant gender disparity (UNESCO, 2010), the sector has grown significantly over the past two decades, and it is more common for children to pursue further education or work in larger cities or abroad. Economic migration is

not limited to educated children – there is history of children being sent to wealthier families, what some writers have described as a form of 'fostering' (Beydoun, 2006). In exchange for working in the family the children would be provided with food and shelter. Attempts to reduce this practice, in which young girls are often badly treated, working long hours and denied access to education, have been difficult, as there is a lack of capacity for enforcing minimum age requirements for schooling (Admassie, 2003), as well as other harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and circumcision (Boyden, Pankhurst, & Tafere, 2013; Emirie, 2005). Van Blerk relates how many girls are driven to sex work (referred to as 'business') by the working conditions as a maid in the large towns (2008). There has also been a growing trend for Ethiopian girls to work as domestic servants in the Middle East, migrating through legal agencies, smuggling, and as a result of trafficking (Beydoun, 2006; De Regt, 2010). Income from children living within the family home (Admassie, 2003; Poluha, 2004), as well as remittances from children outside of the family home can form, living either abroad, or to a lesser extent, in the urban areas, an important part of the household economic strategy (Fernandez, 2013; Gibson & Gurmu, 2012; Jones, Presler-Marshall, & Tefera, 2014).

Some people farmed areas directly adjacent to their houses, others' fields were further away. Near the house some people also grew supplementary plants, such as herbs used in making traditional liquor, known as *araqi*, and occasionally tomatoes, potatoes or onions. Households in Korabta also were more likely to have a fruit tree – mango, avocado or papaya – within the compound, even though only a short distance from Anestenya Wenz, in Wetet Abay, there was a tree nursery, which the extension agents in Anestenya Wenz were involved with. Sunken clay pots inside the

compound might be used to store water, and a few had simply built granaries, to store material away from the damp ground, or grain stores in the shape of round woven cones or cylinders, about a metre across. Most households did not grow their own coffee – there were a few small plantations around the village area, and people bought green (unroasted) coffee in the market. Eucalyptus trees are grown in this area as a 'cash crop', as since their introduction in 1894/95 (Von Breitenbach, 1961 in Dessie & Erkossa, 2011) they have become an essential part of building, used in the structure in the countryside, or as scaffolding in the city, and due to their low-input and high-growth rate are also used for the production of charcoal, although this scale of growth is not without concern about its environmental impacts (Dessie & Erkossa, 2011). Outside of these plantations people planted them on borders as shade, along with grevillea, another exotic tree species. However, unfarmed areas were usually very bare – with short dry grass and dust for half the year, and mud for the rest. Free grazing had theoretically been banned, but enforcement of this rule was quite variable.

We had some trouble correctly translating the Amharic into English for a number of crops, as there is considerable variation in the use of particular words. McCann (1995) records the Oromo and Amharic terms for a number of crops (as spelt in the book, rather than using my standardised spelling):

English	Oromo	Amharic
White sorghum	masinga hadi	mashila
Red sorghum	masinga dima	zangada
Maize	boqolo	yebahar mashila
Barley	gerbo	gebs
Teff	tafi	teff
Wheat	gamadi	sinday
Eleusine (finger millet)	dagusa	dagusa
Chickpeas	shumbura	shimbra
Field peas	atara	ater

Oromo invaders may have brought with them a number of cultigens (McCann 1995), and just as the Oromia place-names have been retained in the area, so might have both Amharic and Oromia names for crops – for example, maize is sometimes referred to as *beqolo* or *mashila*. Hiwot had been taught that *dagusa* referred to sorghum, however sorghum is not grown in this area, and when comparing the crops to known samples, we decided that it was finger millet, as above. The main crops grown in this region were maize (*mashila* or *beqolo*), finger millet (*dagusa*), and teff (*tef*), and people also planted other cereals, such as wheat (*sïnde*) and barley (*gebs*). Although few respondents mentioned growing mustard (*gomenzer*), chickpeas (*shïmbra*), field peas (*atär*), potatoes (*dïnïch*) or carrots (*karot*), these were available in small local markets, and had most likely come from areas that had better access to irrigation.

In Anestenya Wenz, households drew water from a communal pump, in the large government compound. This was used for all the household's water needs, as there was only a small stream running through the village. In other sites, such as Korebta, most households had a well dug into the compound, and in Merawi there were

standing pipes shared between a few households. There has been considerable resistance to the introduction of latrines, as one government employee told me: “they [the farmers] want to relax and see nature”. This was echoed by the volunteers working in community healthcare that I befriended in the field, and studies have suggested that cultural beliefs, foul smell and inconvenience of use are major factors in non-adoption of latrines (Y. Ashebir, Rai Sharma, Alemu, & Kebede, 2013). Low levels of education, monthly income, non-enrolment under any sanitation project and distance from healthcare facilities have also been identified as factors resulting in adoption of latrines (Awoke & Muche, 2013; O’Loughlin, Fentie, Flannery, & Emerson, 2006).

Aside from the houses along the tarmacked road, there was little access for motorised vehicles. During the course of the year the only vehicles I saw within the village were the off-road vehicles belonging to NGOS, government agencies etc., which anyway could not get any further than along the road to the government compound, and one *bajaj* (autorickshaw) which took a groom away to pick up his bride. Donkey carts were therefore the only form of transport.

Gender and poultry management

The categorising of chickens as ‘women’s work’ due to their ‘backyard’ nature has been well documented (Alders & Pym, 2009; Guèye, 2005). The traditional depiction of agricultural work is gender segregated, with the men working in the fields, and herding large livestock, and women staying behind, near the homestead, to cook, clean, fetch water, care for the children, and keep the chickens, who do not stray far from home. This can also lead to a misunderstanding of the roles of women in the

agricultural economy, where men are considered to be farmers, and women housewives. This same perception persists in Ethiopia, where women are often not considered as farmers, despite contributing to a number of agricultural tasks, including weeding, harvesting, transporting farm inputs, and preparing storage containers (Cohen & Lemma, 2014, p. 481; Giwon, 2011, p. 6). However, many of the women I spoke to identified themselves as farmers (*gäbäre)*, rather than as housewives (*yebet imäbet*), and as such I refer to both men and women as farmers if that is their source of income.

In the area of study, poultry management does still fall within the idea of women's work in the area of study, as described in **[Extensive]**. Some families told me that no-one was particularly responsible for caring for the chickens, but as the task fell to whoever was at home, it was normally the women. As Teru, a woman in her thirties in Korabta, explained - "*the men work outside of the house, [they] don't need to collect eggs or give water… as long as we're in the home, it is our job*". Others were more insistent that the duty belonged to women. Another family in Korabta, in which both wife and husband farmed *chat* (qat) and grew mangoes year round, responded to the question 'w*ho takes care of the chickens?':*

[wife] I do

[husband] It is the duty of women

[me] *Why?*

[husband] most of the time the men are outside

[wife] if we had the authority to make the men stay in the home it would be good!

[laughter from both husband and wife]

Although it was seen as women's work, the men would participate if their wives were away, "*When I go to another place he'll take care of them".* However other women insisted that men would never do this, and that they did not have the right knowledge or interest - *"…to keep chickens is for women, to keep other animals is for men. The men have no connection with chickens. [Some people say men help?] It is false, no men do this kind of work."* Others reiterated that only when desperate would men participate in caring for chickens - *"Yes really it is women's business, actually the property is shared, but keeping it is women's business... to collect eggs, to clean the kot, to give water, all this is business of women. No men do this, if there is, he may do this once, then leave home… he doesn't clean the waste of chickens... maybe if his wife runs away from home and he suffers the smell, he will clean it then"*.

These two quotes highlight that both ownership and management of household livestock may have a gender component, and may be contested. Studies in Ethiopia noted a high rate of flock ownership by women (Halima, 2007), however, while I found that women took primary resposibility for care, responses to 'ownership' were more mixed, with some people saying they belonged to them alone, to the children, or were shared family property. In her study in Tanzania, Bagnol (2009) found that decision making over slaughter and sale of chickens may be made by the husband and wife of a household, and the owner of the bird, who might not be either of these people.

The question of married women's property in relation to land is discussed in brief elsewhere in this thesis, but I briefly consider divorce as a way of gaining insight into women's ownership of livestock and other moveable property. Divorce is common

among the Christian, Amhara and most people are able to remarry. As a result of its instability, it is one area of life in which the church does not play a significant role (Tilson & Larsen, 2000). Reports suggest that moveable property brought to marriage is retained on divorce (Boyden et al., 2013; Reminick, 1973). Agreements made during marriage on women's rights to marital property are subject to changes in law, and usually women do not have rights to their husbands' land, but are entitled to half of the property accumulated during marriage (Teklu, 2005). However, women I spoke to claimed that their husbands divorced them but did not return their share of the property. Pankhurst (1992) notes that responsibility for arbitrating divorces shifted from elders to an external authority of the Marriage and Divorce Committee. However, a report from the World Bank (2005) suggests that despite this, traditional courts are often used, and they generally favour men.

Unlike land, and large livestock, one elder in Korebta highlighted that while chickens were not the sole property of women, or solely the property of women, it was the only property men had no interest in. *"Of course others are property of women, but about chickens, men don't know, and don't want to know."* One reason for this was the difference in income from these two types of livestock. We spoke to Fana, and her husband, Gebre, both in their early thirties, who had moved to the houses along the road in Anestenya Wenz, as there were more employment opportunities for them. They lacked the space to keep chickens now, but she reflected on her previous experience.

F: *After I moved here I stopped selling chickens in the market, but before I came here I used to get 200 birr in a year from selling chickens. [200 birr is roughly equivalent*

to $10US]

Me: Is selling chickens important, or something extra?

F: *If you have other work it is something extra…*

[from the back of the house, G calls 'oxen']

F:… yes, the men get more money from selling oxen. They buy small animals and after one year sell them in the market.

Here Fana tells us that keeping chickens is not as profitable as fattening and selling oxen, an activity that men are the primary participants. This association between women and chickens, and men and cattle, is described by Hovorka (2012) as a form of 'gender-species intersectionality', in which the hierarchy 'cattle are greater than poultry' reflects the relationship 'men are greater than women'. This is then reproduced in the literature, as studies focus on cattle (and men), leaving women's relations to livestock little understood. Later, in the **[Intensive]** chapter, I discuss how this association is slowly being subverted by the increased profitability of poultry businesses. When other, greater, sources of income are available, however, men exercise little control over this source of income (Bagnol, 2009).

Decision making

While the conventional narrative around women, poultry and decision-making is one of empowerment, it is difficult (both ethically and practically) to comment on the degree to which women had opportunities for independent decision making, particularly if and when to sell chickens. This is partly due to ways of collecting information about this subject, for example Bagnol (2009) found that men reported they were solely responsible for decision making, whilst women reported that they

shared responsibility. In addition, explicit and hidden strategies might affect overall market behaviour, such as women selling household crops in secret to meet household needs (Aboma, 2006). There is some argument that items of low prestige and commercial value, such as chickens, are of little interest to men, who usually have alternative income sources (Bagnol, 2009). Hovorka (2006) suggests that elevated status of poultry farming has led to the increased interest of men in Botswana.

Many male farmers were respectful of their wives knowledge of chicken keeping, encouraging them to speak to us. However, the input of women into decision-making might be limited to this, and other actions or income sources that occur primarily within the home, such as making and selling tella and araqi. Elsewhere, research on agriculture in Africa has developed models of household decision-making in which the work and profits of men and women in a household are separate. This may take the form of the same crops being grown on multiple plots, or gender specialisation of crops (Duflo & Udry, 2003). Here, as in other Ethiopian contexts, although there is a gender division for work, the profits are considered to be for the benefit of the house.

Men dismissing selling chickens as women's activities, was not an uncommon conversation. However, the decisions on selling were more complex. In some households, the men had total control of decision making, selling, and buying materials. In others, women would decide to sell and consult their husbands. However, many women explained they took a more practical approach – both partners, or the children, may sell depending on who was busy. Women stated they would prefer to sell the chickens themselves, to get money and their husbands also

supported this – for example one man in Anestenya Wenz told us '*it is better for her to sell chickens than to ask for money from me'*.

While women reported that they may discuss their decision to sell chickens with their husbands, they never reported the reverse – that men would consult them on their decision to sell crops or buy items. Working in the Oromo region Aboma describes a similar situation of specific activities for each gender (men and crops, women and cattle), and argues that due to this 'there exists no men's and women's crops'. However, 'the husband plays the role of supervisor in terms of proper utilisation of the household crops', and similarly, women have full rights over the utilisation of incomes from milk and milk products (2006, p. 93). A number of young people told us that they had bought their chickens independently through labour, and now used the income they made to support their education, such as buying pens and exercise books, and to support their parents. Women reported that the sale of chickens was used to cover household expenditures, such as oil, salt and coffee, or to purchase school books or clothes. The question of who does the selling has been demonstrated to be significant elsewhere – when women sell they are more likely to use the money for household needs or reinvestment in the flock, while men are more likely to use it for personal expenses (Aklilu et al., 2008; Bagnol, 2009). As one women in Medamma described to us – '*if [a woman] has 10 eggs, she will get 30 birr, and she will not lose the money because women don't go to the drinking houses.. for the male to visit the alcohol house is a tradition'*.

As women have the primary role in production, sale of chickens is also traditionally considered to be the work of women. However, others reported that if they were

unable to go to the markets, their husbands did do this task and buy the household items for them, rather than wasting money on personal items. When we spoke to men about selling chickens, they laughed at the idea, or suggested that the men who did it would be embarrassed -

[G] ..*the husband doesn't do these things.. if he takes (the chickens to market) his friend might laugh.. males don't take chickens and eggs*

[Ab] Some men do!

[G] .. even we see some guys sell, but those guys are not from here – they sell where they are not known.. even they don't care for the chickens and think it is the sole property of women..

[conversation with group of farmers and Abebe, Korabta]

However, a number of women emphasised that their husbands would help them if they were pregnant or had a very young baby. Attitudes to this varied from place to place – men in Anestenya Wenz were more likely than men in Korebta to say themselves that they helped their wives, although in both places women told me this was commonplace. Unmarried men, such as the teenage boys who sell on behalf of their family, will not be ridiculed for this, but there was an expectation that when they were married and established their own households, their wives would take on this role, and the men would find more appropriate sources of income. Men's involvement in poultry was acceptable within boundaries of a business, such as the intensive exotic chicken producers, or chicken traders. One man in Medemma told us – '*I have never sold chickens, it is the property of women… men don't sell chickens, only those who aren't married, and the traders… [for them] it's ok, it's work*'.

Some of the younger men, earning money towards their education or future, expressed frustration at this attitude. Antene, aged about 20, had finished grade 12, and was preparing for his university entrance examinations. During the course of our conversation with his mother, it had emerged that he kept and sold his own chickens, which he used to buy educational materials. We asked him why he continued to keep chickens despite the attitudes of those around him. '*I am educated, I know what to do and what's better for us. Other people are not educated, when they are children, they know this is the job of the women, and this is the job of the man, so they follow this…'*

I observed with commercial poultry production, that as poultry management become more profitable, and large scale, they are seen as a form of business, rather than farming. This separation of the task from its association with women's roles in rural regions, means that men are more likely to become involved. Previous studies in Ethiopia have noted that men's participation in the marketing of chickens increased with better market access, particularly as secondary sellers (Aklilu et al., 2007; Dessie & Ogle, 2001). The traders are a major route by which chickens move from the rural areas to the urban consumer. Some people may take advantage of low prices to buy chickens to keep for the short-term at home (1-2 weeks) and sell when the prices are better, as a supplement to their usual income. Many of these traders were women, living close to substantial markets, such as that in Merawi. Others buy large numbers regularly from rural markets, and sell them in Bahir Dar, from permanent stalls which they rent. Although the majority of these traders were men, I met a few young women who had started this business, driven by the shortage of available work for young people.

Part of the reason that women were less likely to be involved in trading chickens between rural and urban markets, or selling chickens in the large markets, was a question of travel. Trips to Bahir Dar were unusual for many of the female farmers I spoke to - when I asked Haymanot, a friendly older woman whose children worked in government positions, about selling chickens there, she exclaimed:

'…Because I am a woman! I cannot go. I don't know Bahir Dar well, and my children refuse to allow me... even when I go to Merawi market I am confused [she laughs]… I am sure if I go to Bahir Dar I will not come back to my home'.

This reflects the attitudes towards women's place being in or near the household. . The proverb at the start of this chapter, '*Women and chickens rise early in the morning, but they have no-where to go',* clearly illustrates this view, tying women and chickens to each other, and to the home. It is similar to a proverb from neighbouring Sudan, recorded by Holy – "women are like chickens, they do not travel anywhere" (1991, p. 197). These both emphasise that women and chickens are limited to the domestic, or village sphere. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the associations between gender and types of livestock, and how these may come about by both geographic location and prestige. Larger livestock require herding for grazing, but chickens can feed themselves close to the house. Although chickens were seen as an important part of household strategies, they were rarely seen as pets, given names, or favourites identified (other than in terms of their productivity, 'she's a good layer', 'she hatches chicks well'). Most people referred to them during discussions in quite practical terms, although we often laughed at the antics of the chicks. They were tolerated inside the house until they interfered with activities such as cooking or

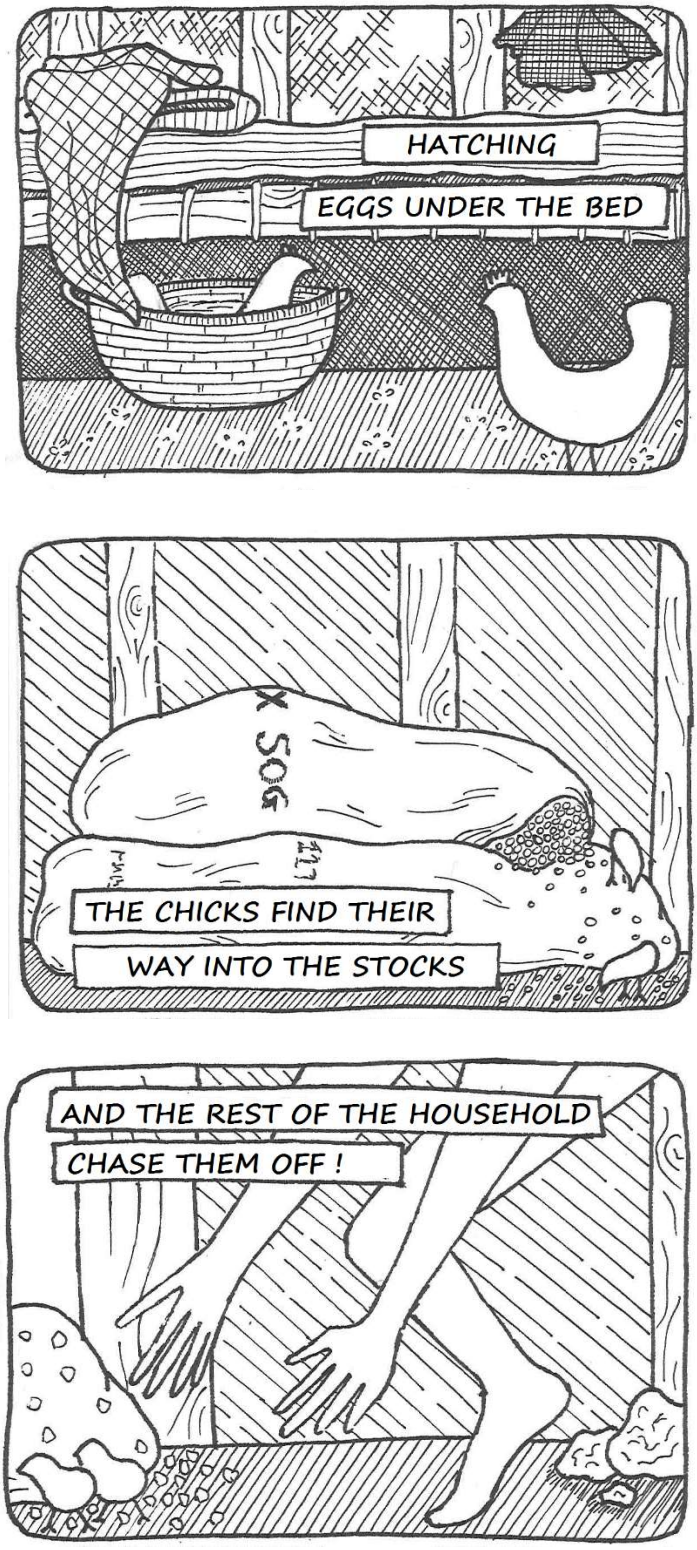


Figure 13. Illustrations. Chickens in the house.

eating, and then would be chased out. Meron, who we meet in the **[Intensive]** chapter, spoke about both the emotional and economic benefit of keeping chickens: "*she [a woman] is happy when she watches the chickens, and at the same time, she also thinks I have this money, I am improving myself.*" Watching chickens, or having 'something for the eye to rest on', both entertained people, and contributed to the welfare of the household, as people would not look at their own children for too long, something that is seen to increase their risk from evil spirits.

In addition to the practical limitation of the chickens to the household, ritual practices also underline this association between the chicken and the house itself. New chickens brought to the house for production were 'rotated' (carried and walked) around the central pole of the house in order to 'tie' them to the house, so that they know where to come to. As houses are no longer built in the same way, few houses have this central pole, so they are instead rotated around the '*medija*' (hearth, also known as '*gulicha*') – a collection of three stones that pans and coffee pots would be balanced on, and one respondent mentioned using the '*mesob*' - the woven container for *injera*. As I commented earlier, this practice is only done for chickens, not for any other livestock. This is because chickens are the only livestock that need to find their own way home – '*they go around alone*' – unlike other animals which need to be herded. However, chickens that would be resident in homes for long were treated differently. Instead of being 'tied' to the house through ritual, they were tied with string to something within the house to stop them wandering off. This also ensured that they were only eating the food that they were given, so people would know that they were 'clean and healthy'. These attitudes towards chickens may also suggest

why *ferenji* chickens are considered to not be proper chickens – unlike the *habesha* chickens, they do not share space and food with members of the household, and do not know how to behave properly. In the case of those kept in commercial conditions, they also disrupt the normal order of the home – such as in the example of Meron, whose sons often cooked dinner while she was caring for the chickens.

Chickens also show strong parallels with the household itself. The proverb "one shouldn't talk about *fingal* in front of the chicks" is a reminder that serious issues should not be spoken about in front of children. This similarity, between the animal child, and the human child, can be observed in the '*aras*' (birth) practices. The term '*aras*' is used to designate a postpartum mother, and may be associated with the word '*bet*' (house) to mean a woman in childbed, or '*lij*' (child) to mean a newborn baby. Hannig suggests that the term derives from the verb '*arrese*' meaning to 'plow, till the land, cultivate the land, farm', and suggesting a connection between processes of food cultivation and human reproduction (2014, p. 297). This association is also suggested in the Ethiopian proverb "Women without a man is like a field without seed" (Hussein, 2009).

Until the introduction of the health clinics, women gave birth in the home, and there has been a resistance to using the services provided at these places for both economic and cultural reasons (Bedford, Gandhi, Admassu, & Girma, 2013; Hannig, 2014). In a study undertaken in the Amhara region, it was found that 95% of births take place at home (Erulkar et al., 2004). The women I spoke to insisted they now had to use the midwives and the local health centre. One respondent attended the hospital in Bahir Dar for specialist intervention during her pregnancy, but due to the

difficulty of transport, and lack of facilities at the local health clinic, she was unable to continue receiving the treatment, and unfortunately lost the baby. Warren (2010) found that women in Ethiopia understood the need for health services during difficult or complicated births, but were often fatalistic about not being able to access health facility services, due to lack of money, long distances, and lack of knowledge, meaning that it could often be too late when help was sought. Recent statistics from the Amhara region suggest that the number of women accessing prenatal health services had not changed significantly, with only 12% of births taking place in private or public health care facilities (CSA, 2014). Part of the reason for this is that births at home are preferred, as close relatives or friends can attend and support the mother, something that is not usually allowed at healthcare facilities (Bedford et al., 2013; Warren, 2010).

During the Lenten fasting period in Anestenya Wenz, we stopped at the house of Tiruye, who had recently given birth. She sat on a straw mattress on the floor, feeding the baby, who was thoroughly covered in a *shamma*, one of the thick white woollen shawls. On her head was a large amount of butter, which periodically dripped down her face, and she wiped off with the edge of the *shamma*. Her mother, sister and a few friends were in the house, making coffee and chatting, and they all invited us in, offering glasses of *tälla* (local beer). Tiruye insisted she was feeling well rested, and that we should come in and have a coffee. On strings across the house hung *qwanta* (strips of dried meat), and bunches of maize, and incense sticks had been placed directly into the earth floor. They were familiar with my research interests, and the women begun to tell me about the *aras* traditions in this area.

"Before this time, people used to make the coffee ceremony when the baby was coming, but now the government does not give permission to give birth in the home, so they do it when they return from the clinic.. people drink araqi, tella, and tea.. they [the family and neighbours] eat 'genfo' (a type of white flour), they eat it with butter (as a kind of porridge). They put butter on her [the aras'] head.. If they have a boy they say 'il' twelve times (ululate), and twelve times they put butter on the head (they pour the butter on the head of the mother for the period of the twelve ululations). If it is a girl, they do this nine times.. having a girl is not a good thing.. having a boy is better than a girl.. we use tunjit to remove the flies and the smell, but now we use sandal (incense sticks) most of the time… if the family are rich, when she comes home they give sheep, otherwise chickens… visitors bring doro wot, eggs, butter or milk"

[What is the purpose of the butter on the head? (usually butter is used to soften the hair)]

"..it makes the face clean and removes bad things in the face, and cleans the body also.. even it cleans the…" [pause, and laughter]

A number of interesting things emerge from this conversation. The first is the importance of the family and social group in celebration of life occasions, and in particular eating and drinking together. The consumption of butter, eggs and meat suggests that women who are '*aras*' are also clearly exempt from the prohibition on animal products during the fasts of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and the only

times I observed someone cooking *doro wot*, a spicy chicken stew, during one of these periods is when they were taking it as a gift to those who had recently given birth. The special foods given (meat, porridge, butter, berbere) are considered to heal or warm the body, or congeal bodily substances, aiding women's recovery (Hannig, 2014). The importance of hospitality, exchange of food as gifts, and in particular, of *doro wot,* is explored in more detail in the chapter on **[Food]**. The preference of male children over female children is also clear, in addition to more ululations for a boy than a girl, boys are christened forty days after birth, and girls at eighty days. It is also clear in the language that links women and chickens, which I explore later in this chapter.

One thing that emerges repeatedly in that conversation is the need to 'clean' both the body and the house. The period of childbirth and its immediate aftermath are considered to be dangerous – both to the mother and child, and to those who come into contact with them. In her work on childbirth in the Amhara region, Hannig (2014) found that for the first ten days after delivery, until visited by a priest, the mother may not touch anything in the house or eat with other people. After this, she may fulfil some household tasks, and may be able to leave the house. However, women cannot enter the church until the baptism of the child, forty days for a boy, and eighty for a girl – these rules originate in the Old Testament passage Leviticus 12:1-5[19].

[19] (1) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (2) Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. (3) And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. (4) And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled. (5) But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days. (from kingjamesbibleonline.org)

Women are prohibited from entering the church during menstruation, but also consider themselves to be unable to enter the church due to urinary or fecal incontinence resulting from obstetric fistula (Hannig, 2013). These states suggest an 'unclean' and dangerous opening of the mother's body, a transgression of the boundaries of the sacred space of the womb, and the outside world (Boddy, 1989). Hannig (2014) suggests that women's separation from their proper state as Christian women during the 'aras' period was so profound that they were referred to as 'Muslim', as they could not behave as proper Christians, attending church and maintaining religious fasts.

While the purpose of the seclusion and special foods were explained as a chance to rest, recover and rebuild strength, Hannig (2014) argues that the rules regarding contact with others, and exclusion from church, strongly suggest that perceived impurity is an important part of this. Both Boylston (2012) and Hannig (2014) argue that the purity of a new-born child achieved in Leviticus[20] through sacrifice of a lamb and pigeon, is now in Ethiopia instead gained by christening. During this period of seclusion, however, smaller measures are also taken to protect the mother and child from spirits. Women reported that pieces of iron would be kept under the pillow, to protect them from evil. Hannig also found that women would keep metal, knives, or even rifles by their bedside, to protect the child (Hannig, 2014). The practice of fumigating with *tunjit*, fragrant dried leaves of a local plant, to remove 'the flies and the smell' is also considered to be protective against spirits, and incense is often burned during coffee ceremonies and in churches. One older woman in Korabta

[20] Leviticus 12: 6-8

argued - *"It is not to the avoid the smell for people.. it is not for the baby, only for mother and her clothes, to keep them from bad things. Tunjit has the power to keep people from these things."*

It is here that parallels with chickens can be found. Fumigating newly hatched chicks with tunjit is common. People gave a number of reasons for the use of tunjit, including protection from flies, mosquitoes, disease or 'bad things', removing the smell, or for reasons as general as 'to make them strong' or as 'good wishes'. Some differentiated between the uses of the practice for chickens and humans. *"[I only know] tunjit is for protecting from bad spirits for people, and to make chicks strong."* One young woman in Korebta described the process for us:

> *"Immediately after the egg is hatched we put them [the chicks] on 'wonfit' [a kindo of sieve used to sort grain]. Under the wonfit there is fire, and on the fire we put tunjit."*

She had recently lost a baby, and so had some *tunjit* in the house, which she put on the fire so that we could experience the sweet smell of the smoke. She went on:

> *"Women who are 'aras' – all their clothes are passed over the smoke – infused with it. It keeps you safe from 'saytan' and from the bad things ('kitfo neger') especially the bad spirits ('megagna'). We do this for people and chickens, not other animals. For the aras this lasts for ten days, but for chickens only when they hatch."*

While most were not sure why this was not done for other animals – who tended to be protected by use of *tsebel* (holy water), a knowledgeable elder in Korebta was able

to describe changing practices in the area due to medicine, disease risk and scarcity of plants used in traditional medicine:

> "*Some time ago, the same [fumigating with tunjit] had been done for cows – not at birth, but when they caught epidemic disease 'wetete'... but the government controlled the disease, we don't worry about it – but for chickens, the disease is still there, that's why we infuse them with smoke. We do this when we remove the chickens from the place where they hatched. This habit has been some time, and still we are doing this, but now tunjit is becoming rare, and will become a problem in the future. I had planted some near the well, and had a big plant, but 'aras' and those who had chickens hatched, took it and finally there is none…"*

Figure 14. Fumigation with 'tunjit'. From L-R. Dried tunjit, smoking some tunjit on coals, the wonfit used to hold the chicks.

I argue that one reason that this might be done for chickens and not other animals, is the parallels between women and chickens in the household – both 'give birth' inside the living space of the house, which then needs to be purified. The placenta is buried around the homestead after birth (Hannig, 2014), and the remnants of 'birth' of the chicks, the eggshells, are also not discarded, but placed in a specific location

around the house – in this case, not buried, but stacked on a porcupine quill (or if one cannot be found, a stick), and stuck onto the outside of the house, near the roof. When I asked why this was done, most people told me that it was another practice, like smoking with tunjit, to 'make the chicks strong', although they did not know *why* or *how* this would work – they saw others, and their parents doing it, and carried on the practice.

Chickens in speech

The language referring to chickens could also be used as a metaphor for women and domestic life. Some of these idioms and proverbs reflect the lived experiences of both women and chickens, limited to the domestic sphere. Others reflect negative cultural depictions of women as noisy, promiscuous, or mindless (in Amharic, 'heartless', as feelings are located in the stomach, and thoughts in the heart). During the sharing of poultry meat, women cannot eat the heart of a chicken, 'because they are already heartless' ('*lib yellenim*'). The depiction of women in African oral traditions is generally as 'foolish, weak, jealous, evil, unfaithful, dependent, frivolous and seductive' (Hussein, 2005), and this has been shown to also be the case in Ethiopian oral traditions, and is often linked to stories involving religious life (Presbey, 1999). Some proverbs in Ethiopia also suggest that women are not capable of managing their home, and are poor disciplinarians of their own children, denying them competence in their own realm (Presbey, 1999).

The association between people and animals in the context of language is often a negative one, as literally 'dehumanising' (Haslam, Loughnan, & Sun, 2011). Studies in English, Spanish, French and Italian identify associations between women and

animals as involving small, or domestic animals, linking women to the productive, and reproductive sphere, or of possessing traits that are seen as negative, such as stubbornness (donkeys), or stupidity and noise (birds) (Baider & Gesuato, 2003; Brandes, 1984; de la Cruz Cabanillas & Tejedor Martinez, 2006; Rodríguez, 2009). Similar associations can be observed in Ethiopia – for example various translations of the saying "The woman is like a donkey, she must be beaten to ensure her docility" are quoted in the literature on women's place in Ethiopia (Alsop, Frost Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006; Legovini, 2005; Moreno, 1995). This is similar to the Sudanese proverb "Do not keep your stick away from these three: a woman, a drum, and a donkey" (Ahmed in Jeylan Wolyie Hussein, 2009). I recorded some examples of women being compared to chickens:

አንደ ዶሮ አሸካካሺ *inde doro ishekekeshi* *"you cackle like a hen"*	Here a woman's talkativeness is being compared to the noises of chickens.
አንደ ዶሮ የሚፈነገል / የምትፈነገል *inde doro yemifenegel / yemtfelegal* "you want to be like a chicken" (to male and female)	This suggests sexual promiscuity on the part of both men and women

These were also used to draw negative comparisons between men and women, irrespective of context. A failed man is often compared to a women, who is 'naturally' inferior (Hussein, 2009; Presbey, 1999). Thus threats between men suggested that they would either limit them to the domestic sphere, or directly make them behave like a chicken.

አንደ ዶሮ አንዳላንዳፋደፋህ “I will make you like a chicken”	This was described as relating to ‘when you cut the throat of chicken and throw it, and it jumps here and there’
አግርህን ሰብሬ ዶሮ ጠባቂ ነው የማደርግህ “I will break your leg and make you watch the chickens”	A threat, the implication being that someone with a broken leg cannot do anything but sit in the house

Proverbs are also being used to catalyse change. In the North Wollo zone of the Amhara region, Woldegies found that positive proverbs have recently emerged, showing respect to women’s achievements inside and outside the home, such as “With women, everything tough goes easier and easier”, “The sooner women learn how to write the quicker the sun rushes to rise”. Proverbs promoting marital equality have also emerged, such as “An omelet cooked by a couple is perfectly delicious,” and “In a family husband and the wife are sole owners” (2014, p. 178). This reflects messages distributed through the school system, extension training and the media, as Antene’s comments about the difference in perceptions of work through the eyes of ‘educated’ and ‘not educated’ people. It was not just the young people who had taken on these ideas. As we approached a house on the outskirts of Anestenya Wenz, we saw a man washing clothes. He invited us in, and proudly showed us photos of his four daughters in graduation robes. They now all lived in Bahir Dar and worked in good government positions, and were able to send money home to their parents. He emphasised how they would not have been able to earn as good a living by remaining uneducated and staying in the rural areas. In Korebta too, I was told that due to ‘equality’ both men and women could do the same work, although it might still be met with social ridicule:

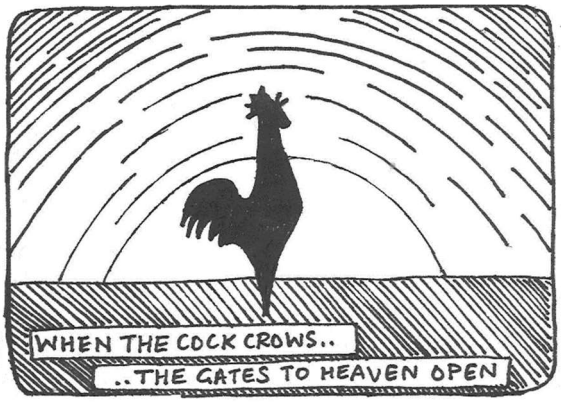
> *"We both care for them [the chickens], it should not be considered as always the female duty – but in reality, it is the duty of women. Nowadays they say equality – and now they [women] have become equal. Many said it is duty of women, but it is the wrong perception. Even to fetch water is a woman's duty, but I fetch water for my wife, and others may say: "Look, he is doing the duty of a woman!"."*

In conversation with this same farmer, we had also discussed the prohibition on women ploughing. He told us that it might be acceptable for school-age girls to help their families with their plots, but there was not any evidence of the more substantial change in attitude to women ploughing that was observed in the South Wollo zone of the Amhara region as a result of SARDP (Sida Amhara Rural Development Program) (Shiferaw, 2008).

As the quote above shows, male farmers' attitudes towards these changes were not always positive. One farmer had provoked quiet anger in the usually unruffled Hiwot, by complaining about how these new ideas of women's rights had unsettled their way of life – '*the government treat us, men and women, as equal but it doesn't work – it's a story, its not practical. I have ideas, but she refuses, otherwise we would have lots of money – before I could 'kick' her, now the government has told her that she has rights'.* He was the only man that expressed this opinion to me so strongly - although my status as an outsider may have meant that others felt that they could not.

In other areas of life though, change seems to have been accepted, and adapted to local customs. For example, although Warren (2010) found that there was a

perception that health providers would not allow the specific foods and ceremonies around childbirth, the example of Tiruye above suggests that people still do these in the home, and incorporate aspects of both biomedical and spiritual care to ensure the health of both mother and baby. In the following chapter on **[Spirits]** I explore this in relation to broader concerns about health, witchcraft and the spiritual realm.



Spirits

"When we arrive at the river there are two large groups – on the rocky shore are groups of families around small fires, cooking doro wot in pots, roasting coffee beans and bekolo [maize], they have clearly been here for a while. Most are wearing old and worn traditional clothes, now more grey than white. A few women have come to sell araqi, and serve small portions in shot glasses from trays on the ground. There are a few young men either acting as guides or there just to enjoy the araqi. In the centre of the river there are a cluster of rocks, around which people are bathing and washing their clothes. I am told that a young boy was recently killed by a hippo there. Closer to the shore, people are slaughtering and cleaning their chickens. The banks are covered with discarded body parts and black, red and white feathers. The raptors circle overhead looking for opportunities to swoop down and carry off some neglected pieces of meat.

We speak to a few different groups. One girl has come with her baby and husband. She covers her mouth with her hand or shamma [scarf] when she speaks. They come from a village 80 km away, and sacrifice a chicken at this time every year, to get the blessings of the Nile for health for the year ahead (she is not ill but has come for blessing). A young girl is there with her father – she has epilepsy and they have come for a cure… We stop at another small group – they are eating doro wot firfir [a mixture of chicken stew and injera]. There is one elderly lady sitting under an umbrella, a middle aged woman and her son, who looks to be around my age. She says she has come to try and counter some 'spiritual violence' against her. Her husband and the däbtäras (trainee priests) are against her and have made her crops bad and her cows violent. If the priests knew she was here, they would punish by making her fast to remove the sins of these practices. A few people tell us that just the belief that the Nile cures everything is enough to make things better! Some enterprising young men are selling empty plastic bottles – for people to take the Nile water home and sprinkle over other members of the family, fields or livestock to bring fortune…"

Early in my fieldwork, I observed the 'Tirr' sacrifice at the Nile River, known locally as 'Abay' or 'Ghion'[21]. The Amhara region of Ethiopia is predominantly of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, yet the continuation of Tirr sacrifice shows how many people continue to practice spirit beliefs alongside Christianity, against the teachings of the church. As one elder told me:

[21] This is the common local spelling of 'Gihon', one of the four rivers that flowed from Eden in the Bible - "And the name of the second river *is* Gihon: the same *is* it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia." (Genesis 2:13). It may also be spelt 'Giyon' [Cheeseman 1936 (Ullendorff, 1967)].

> *There are three beliefs – the church, the Quran, and the indigenous – the indigenous is not written, transmitted generation to generation orally only… the church and the Quran do not accept these kinds of things'* [Kegne, church elder in Bahir Dar.]

As I shall show, not only do people often ignore the teachings of their religious leaders by practicing magic or spirit beliefs, the practice of these beliefs is often associated with days of Christian religious significance. The role of chickens in these practices offered some insight into the complex relationships between the church and the spiritual world. For example, the proverb of the title, "*When the cock crows, the gates to heaven open*" was explained to me as how the cock crowing to mark the morning, shows it's safe to go outside, as the demons that are lying in wait disappear in the sunlight.

Religion in the area of study

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the dominant religion of the Amhara region, with 83% of the population recorded as being Orthodox Christian in the latest census that data is available for (CSA, 2007a). In the market town of Wetet Abay, local town of Merawi and the city of Bahir Dar, there is a large Muslim population. Overall in the Amhara region less than 1% of the population are neither Orthodox nor Muslim[22]. However, Bahir Dar is a large town, and a Protestant church was being built during my time in the field. The Protestants are often referred to as 'Pente' and face

[22] According to The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia this includes the categories: 'Protestant'(inc. Seven Day Adventist, Pentecost, Lutheran, Baptist, Anglican, Presbyterian, "Meserete Kirstos", "Mulu Wengel", "Kale Hiywot"), 'Traditional' and 'Other' (Jehovah's, Behais, Jews, Hindus) (CSA, 2007a)

discrimination from both the the Orthodox and Muslim populations (Poluha, 2004, p. 164). In the Amhara state there are also a number of Ethiopian Jews, often known as the 'Beta Israel', although around 50,000 fled for Israel during the Derg period. In Ethiopia they were often known by the derogatory terms 'Falasha' (which suggests they are squatting on the land), 'Agaw' (used for pagan groups in present and pre-Christian Ethiopia), or '*buda*' (see below) and '*jib*' (hyena), referring to their believed supernatural powers (Salamon, 1999; Zegeye, 2008). Around Lake Tana, there is a population of people known as the 'Weyto', who were formerly hippopotamus hunters on the shores of the lake. As both the hippopotamus, and later the fish, stocks in the lake dwindled, the Wayto took up craftwork, which may be the source of their alternative name, the 'Nägädä', meaning 'trade'. The Weyto are rejected by the Amhara for both their consumption of hippopotamus meat, thought to be impure, and their work as artisans, thought to be a mark of '*buda'*, the evil eye (Freeman, 2003).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

The Ethiopian Orthodox church is strongly associated with the pre-revolution Highland state (both the Amhara and Tigray regions), and having lost power during the periods of political turmoil, now emphasises its role in the historical and cultural heritage of the country (Haustein & Østebø, 2011). The majority of the rural population of the Amhara region are Orthodox. Across the countryside there are small, brightly painted churches, usually built of corrugated iron, and surrounded by

small areas of forest[23]. They are associated with particular saints, determined by the consecration of the *tabot*, a replica of the Ark of Covenant, which determines the saint days celebrated by the region[24]. The '*mehaber*' is an organisation of farmers that share a monthly feast associated with the saint particular to their church and *tabot* (Bevan & Pankhurst, 2007). In the village I undertook most of my fieldwork, Anestenya Wenz, there are two churches which the villagers attended, along the road to the north and south, thus women could be seen preparing large amounts of *injera* and *wot* at two points in the month. There were no mosques, the nearest being in either Merawi or Wetet Abay, and no-one identified themselves as following any other (or no) religion.

In studies among the Christian highlands, farmers consider themselves more religious than urban populations, in particular due to their stricter adherence to calendar of fasts (Aklilu et al., 2008). I discuss feasting and fasting is more detail in the following chapter on **[Food]**. The other aspect of these religious fasts in that they require a break from heavy physical labour. Failure to follow these rules is believed to lead to a collective punishment by God. Aspen (2001) speaks of scholarly worries about the 'regression of the economy' due to the number of these days, resulting from a poor

[23] In the northern Highlands, these are often the only areas where forests have not been converted into farm or grazing land, and are perceived as holy places, and as such act as sanctuaries for plant and animal species which may not grow elsewhere (Bongers, Alemayehu Wassie, Sterck, Tesfaye Bekele, & Demel Teketay, 2006). For example, to find examples of *simisa,* a plant commonly used for treatment of chickens, Abraham and I walked around the outskirts of the church grounds.

[24] (Boylston, 2012, p. 32) explains about the tabot - "The innermost ring, the Holy of Holies (qidduse qiddusan), houses the sacred tabot or ark/altar. Every church has a tabot, a replica of the Ark of the Covenant (tabote s'í'on) which is consecrated in the name of a particular saint. This is the centre of the church's sacred power, and lay people are forbidden from ever seeing or touching it. This is where priests prepare the Eucharist. The tabot leaves the church only two or three times per year, at the feast of T'imqet and on annual saints' days, and at these times it is covered with an ornate cloth."

understanding of the role of religion in the countryside. Somewhat conflicting attitudes are reported – while Haile describes the church as "both the most influential institution in rural settings and a central feature of communities as well as of each family's daily life" (2015, p. 33), Reminick claimed that the 'peasants allegiance to the church is casual' (1973, p. 79), demonstrated by belief in zar and other spirits occurring in defiance of the church (p. 177). There are few modern ethnographies in Amhara that focus on the role of the Orthodox Church in the countryside. In Southern Ethiopia, young people and women are moving towards the Protestant church, rejecting the 'backward traditions' of the Orthodox church represented by older influential men (Dea & Scoones, 2003).

Spiritual practices

Conducting research on spiritual practices outside those of the church is, by its nature, difficult. Tom Boylston, looking for evidence of possession cults in the Zege Peninsular in Bahir Dar, found during the first year of his fieldwork, '*if there were organised possession cults... in Zege, I was not going to see them, and that in all probability there were not.. Zar were known to possess people at funerals, at night, and in people's homes... there is no polite way to try to witness such an event… what I learned from asking about zar was that people denied that any sort of organised cult of possession existed anywhere in Zege, though it might do elsewhere'* (2012, p. 152). Given these challenges, I tried to collect information about the spiritual world in an indirect way. The role of chickens in Orthodox celebrations and traditional ritual offered a glimpse into the complex relationships between the church and the wider spiritual world.

A number of traditions have had an influence on the 'indigenous' religions that the church elder referred to at the start of the chapter. Aspen refers to these as a 'knowledge buffet' of Hebrew Judaism, Afar Islam, Arab saints, Cushitic animists, and the orthodox church's saints and angels (2001, p. 19). Due to the wide variation in language and culture across Ethiopia, it is impossible to talk about a single 'Ethiopian' experience. Even among the regions of Amhara, different political histories have led to the incorporation of different groups of people, languages and religion. For example, East Gojjam accepted a large number of Sudanese refugees in the 1880s (Erlich, 2010). Oromiya (also known as the Oromo Nationality Zone), is predominantly Oromo and Muslim, in a state that it is considered to be both Amhara and Orthodox. There, Sufiism redefined the spirits of the possession cult of the region, as malevolent jinns, a process that Eresso (2015) calls the domestication of spirits. In this place then, Sufi Islam provides the 'conceptual and religious framework' for these practices, as Aspen (2001) describes for the Orthodox Church elsewhere in the Amhara region. Eresso notes that translating these practices within an Islamic framework have given the 'zar, wuqabi, ateetee and other non-islamic spirits' a new lease of life, under the overarching framework of jinn (2015, p. 22). In the context of the fieldwork, some church elders also defined the spirits as '*saytan*', associating non-Orthodox ideas with those of the church, in order to discourage people from continuing these practices.

Unlike elsewhere in Africa, where Christianity is a relatively new addition to the religious landscape, Ethiopia has a history of Christianity that begins in the 3rd century CE. Although the terms 'indigenous' and 'traditional' are used in Ethiopia, they often refer to the animist beliefs found in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region, and those which have been subject to 'retraditionalisation' in the political

context post-Derg, such as '*Waaqeffannaa'* the Oromo traditional belief (Osmond, 2014; Regassa & Zeleke, 2016). Eresso (2015) uses the term 'Spirit Possession Cult', but both the 'possession' and 'cult' aspects were not apparent to me during my time in the field. Those of both Christiana and Muslim backgrounds in Mecha and Bahir Dar Zuria would deny they were followers of either traditional religion or a spirit cult. However, as I discuss in this chapter, the spirits constitute a real threat in the world around them. As a result I use the term 'spirit' beliefs, which, while vague, allows for the blending of these practices in everyday life. Due to the ambiguity of terminology, I have used the term 'spirits' to cover the range of the beings that are not considered to be saints or angels, which may include buda, zar, tist, saytan and jinn, all of which I attempt to describe below.

Many names are given to the spirits that populate the landscape around the area of study. Even the understanding of what these spirits are varies between households. It was often difficult to discuss them with people, which Reminick explained as 'people are highly reluctant to talk about their monsters. If they do it is with a lower whisper out of fear of attracting the attention of the being in question' (1973, p. 207). This was also the case for the *t'enqway* (witches), who were thought to have means of knowing what was said about them, as one woman told me about Kidist, a *t'enqway* that people from Korebta visited –

> '*A man went there because his daughter was missing… some people told him to go to Kidist, and he said, 'oh, this leper, she will not know', and when he went there, she said to him, 'Why do you come here to the house of a leper?''*

While some believed that these practices and beliefs were old-fashioned, or against their religion, the fear of the spirits remains prevalent – as one girl laughingly told us – '*I don't believe in it, but I fear it!*' The spirits were described using a number of different names – qolle, tist, zar, wuqabi. Most people did not use all of the terms, but one or two to refer to specific situations, during our conversations. I sought the guidance of specialists, both a church elder, Kegne, and a Muslim practitioner of 'yebahel hakim' (traditional medicine), Yessuf, as well as those lay people who tried to explain things to me.

Finding practitioners

Identifying those responsible for interacting with the spiritual realm is complex – and a person might take on multiple roles. Working in the Zege peninsula, Boylston (2012) describes the complexities of categorising traditional expertise, both of terms of who the experts are, whether their expertise falls into the realm of 'religion', 'medicine', or 'magic', and their moral status. For example, a 'traditional doctor' who works with herbal remedies, western biomedicine and spirit cures, but who does not use spirit forces, is not considered troubling. The roles of '*awaqi*' (the knowers), '*t'enqway*' (witches/sorcerers) and '*balagendas*' (zar practitioners) are considered to be morally problematic, particularly as their power is seen to come from possession by a spirit. Weissleder describes the *t'enqway* as being not educated, possession being merely something that happened to them (1965, p. 85), rather than knowledge acquired through learning to read the religious books that give members of the church power.

Although the church is often cited as being against magical or occult practices, there is a prevailing belief that priests, deacons and monks, possess occult knowledge

which they may use for personal or business gain (Boylston, 2012, p. 148). In addition, it is associated with a group of people who are strongly associated with this kind of practice, the *däbtära*. Boylston (2012) describes them as "non-ordained men who are able to sing the hymns and liturgical chants of the church" (p146), and my own informants described them as being trainee priests. Shelemay (1992) notes that they have multiple roles; a formal role as musicians and liturgical practitioners, and a secondary role as magicians and healers. The *däbtära*s are feared as their ability to read the old books gives them power. They may act as 'star counters', 'book revealers', and use numbers to counteract mischief of demons and evil spirits (Weissleder, 1965, p. 70)[25].

Boylston (2012) suggests that their failure to continue to ordination, assumed to be due to not maintaining the sexual purity required of a priest, leads to a combination of religious learning and physical impurity that is both dangerous and powerful (p146). People often turn to the *däbtära* to guide them when they feel that the usual methods have failed – '*if you have someone, a member of the family is sick, and the doctors can no longer help, you go to the däbtära for help'*. Some *däbtära* abandon their religious life to become *balagendras*, intermediaries to the spirit world. It brings with it significant benefits – while health insurance is approximately 150 birr per family, and the private hospital is 100 birr for the doctor, people pay 100-200 birr to the *balegendra* for advice – I was told of one man who had earnt enough from his

[25] '*Awdunigist*' is used to refer to both the practice (Young, 1975a) and the book (Rossini, 1941) that is used for divination. Letters of the syllabary (see the Glossary) are given numerical value, and may be used to code or decode hidden knowledge through complex calculations involving information such as the names, dates, or places significant to the questioner (Bekerie, 1997; Young, 1977). Rossini (1941) in '*Lo 'Awda Nagast Scritto Divinatoria Etiopico'* uses instead the spelling 'Awda Nagast' – and translates this to 'Circle of Kings'

practice to build a large villa, and they boast often of their international clients, who travel to Ethiopia for this special medicine.

The local spirits

The experts that I spoke to, gave differing accounts of the spirits that could be found in the area. Both *jinn*s and '*saytan*' figure in the landscape. The latter may be considered both the devil of the Christian bible, and the little devils hiding in the countryside (in streams, pools, and caves), described by Reminick (1973, p. 208). However the most commonly used terms to describe the spirits were '*qolle*', '*tist*' and '*zar*'. Below I allow the experts to describe the spirits referred to as in their own terms, before I consider these in relation to how these terms are used elsewhere in the area.

Yessuf, has a license from the government for traditional medicine, and told me about the international conferences that he has been invited to, and clients which find him from Tigray and Gojjam, and even Sudan. When a person comes to him to be healed, he told me, they tell him what spirit they have, then they chew khat and pray all night, and at some point the person will declare themselves 'free' of the spirit. Although he is Muslim, he told me they do not care about the religion of the people they are treating, and said it is their duty to help – '*we make people happy, this makes us happy'*. He considered '*qolle*' '*tist*' and '*zar*' terms that others used based on their own traditions, to refer to spirits, and used the term '*qolle*' himself. He defined the '*qolle*' this way:

> '*Is it possible to hold water in your hands? This is qolle... we don't know what they are, we only know when they are cured*'

This idea of qolle as spirit possession by an external agent differs from how many used it, as an external spirit within the house. He uses it again in a different way, as a form of expression of personal preference -

'*… to wear clothes you don't like might make you feel uncomfortable. Or you may like some clothes, and I don't like them, but they make you feel comfortable. These individual things... qolle is like this, everyone has their own'*. The *qolle* may force them to react in ways that are different from culturally accepted norms – such as refusing coffee, or crying at something they don't like. This is reminiscent of Leslau, who asserts that although both the Christian and Muslim churches condemn the belief in zar, the prevalent opinion at that time was that "*everyone 'has a zar'*" (1949, p. 204).

Eyasu, an elder in Korabta, sat on the floor in his son's house, wrapped in a blanket, and wearing long strings of wooden beads. He told us that he was 90 years old, and able to live longer, but that the loss of his wife 3 years ago had weakened him. He explained the role of the tist spirit –

> *'The tist lives with human beings like a spirit, it may even kill people. In the holiday, if you do less than what you always do* [such as not providing as much food and drink], *the tist will be unhappy. There is a big holiday, if the tist throws upon you* [possesses or affects you] – *tirr Mariam, or tirr Michael – if you do less than usual, it will throw upon you. You must slaughter either chickens or sheep, black and white. When the tist comes, it speaks out what it lacks on that day – other people will bring that thing – it promises some day where you can fulfil*

that thing – gives only 1 or 2 months – on the same day will do something… all that the tist likes..'

And here from Kegne, the Christian elder in Bahir Dar:

'Qolle and tist are quite different… Tist is something that lives with the person always... Qolle is communal – the community worships them, like the mountains or the big trees that are in the village – it is not personal'… and zar is the same as tist – some people call it zar, some people call it tist... but there is some slight difference. Zar is something more that that tist... if tist grows to level of zar.. Zar is active, irritating, while tist remains in mind of person. Tist is inside, it can be silent... tist is dormant stage, and zar is active… What we consider wuqabi in our religion is god, but people in society [believe] it is something that guards you from evil [like a guardian spirit].'

So here we can see that different kinds of spirits are associated with different places and scales – from the personal to the community. Also not all spirits are bad – some are neutral, like the *tist*, which has not grown to the stage at which it is dangerous, and others, like the wuqabi, are protective. Kegne goes on to define two types of *zar* spirit:

'T*here are two types of zar – one is family spirit, the other is out of the family, the people possessed by zar go from village to village to get money. For the family zar, that zar appears two or three times in a year, and on holidays – you sacrifice (livestock) and eat its meat. No-one*

outside of the family can eat – even the daughter's new husband won't eat until family has accepted them.

For the person going village to village, the zar is on some person, he walks with it to every house, people invite him into the home, and he waits for some kind of ceremony, he begs the zar… they feed him for a week, and then he asks his zar, to keep them safe for one year. His zar asks the family zar, he is a mediator – his zar and their zar communicate, even he calls the zar by some kind of name, ask "why do you trouble them, they always sacrifice some kind of chicken for you" – he is called the bal wuqabi.'

Local spirits in the wider context

The spirits known as '*qolle*' or '*tist*' have been described less frequently than the *zar* spirits. While occasional mentions to *qolle* as spirits may be made, the most thorough description I was able to find was made by Leslau (1958), in his short paper '*The Arabic Origin of the Ethiopic Qollē "Spirit".*' In this paper he outlined the short descriptions of *qolle* (or *qole*) given in translation dictionaries and some early accounts of Ethiopia. These describe *qolle* as a spirit, either benevolent or malevolent, residing in the house[26], although one account describes it as the spirit responsible for causing epilepsy. Lewis (1984) describes '*k'allu*' (*qolle*) as a special type of possession, distinct from *zar*, in which a spirit periodically possesses particular

[26] (Leslau, 1958) gives the following examples from Amharic-French and Amharic-Italian dictionaries:
Baeteman (1929) '*de genies domestiques qui, d'apres la croyance populaire, habitent les maisons*'
Guidi (1935) '*custode, spirit (angelico o diabolico), specie di 'genius loci', che si crede occupare e custodire una casa*'

men and women, allowing them to act as 'seer' or medium, and help people. This is similar to the *bal wuqabi* in Kegne's description above.

The '*zar possession cult*' has been written about in multiple contexts in East Africa and the Middle East, including amongst Muslims in Sudan (Boddy, 1989; Kenyon, 1995), pastoral nomads of Somalia (Lewis, 1966), Ethiopian Jews in Israel (Edelstein, 2002; Zegeye, 2008), and both Muslim and Christian Ethiopia (Natvig, 1987; Young, 1975a). Broadly, these describe *zar* as a possessing spirit, the arrival of which is signalled by sickness, and which may be exorcised or appeased during a group ceremony which may involve the transgression of norms, such as smoking, dancing, drinking blood and alcohol and cross-dressing (Boddy, 1989; Lewis, 1966). Although similar beliefs and practices are found across these places, they exhibit variety. The origin of *zar* cults is not well understood, with both Abyssinian, Arabic and Oromo origins suggested (Kapteijns & Spaulding, 1996; Natvig, 1987). There is considerable variety of presentation of *zar* within Ethiopia, due to the number of religions it co-exists with. Within Christian Ethiopia, although *zar* possession has been described by a number of scholars, it is not usually described as 'cult'-like, unlike in other East African contexts (Young, 1975b).

As can be illness is the first sign of zar possession, one focus in the study of *zar* is the role of *zar* in both illness causation and treatment (Hodes, 1997; Teshome-Bahire, 2000; Young, 1975b) and as a form of group therapy (Al-Adawi, Martin, Al-Salmi, & Ghassani, 2001; Boddy, 1988; Messing, 1958). However, the main focus has been on the prominent role of women in spirit possession, and its potential role in acquiring agency for women. Lewis (1966) describes *sar* possession in women in Somalia as a

means by which women who have little security in their relationships with men may air their grievances obliquely and gain satisfaction, for example by the *sar* demanding luxurious clothes, perfume and food. He thus interprets *zar* possession cults in a similar manner to possession cults in other situations, as a means by which women are compensated for exclusion and lack of authority in other spheres. The *zar* spirits in both Sudan and Ethiopia may also demand henna, perfumes, gold, clothes, and animal sacrifices, those things which women themselves may desire (Boddy, 1989; Reminick, 1973; Young, 1975b).

Lewis and Leslau describe *zar* possession as something that men may simultaneously believe, and view as a deceitful trick that women play against them to gain objects they desire, or freedom from behavioural norms (Leslau, 1949; Lewis, 1966). However, Boddy (1989) describes it as having less of an element of volition, perhaps due to her ability to access the lives and opinions of the women. *Zar* in Ethiopia are also thought to prefer women and the poor (Young, 1975b), although it is usually described as not having the same cult-like status (Aspen, 2001; Boylston, 2012; Natvig, 1987), with a few exceptions, such as at a Sufi shrine in the Oromiya region of Amhara, where women of all religious and ethnic backgrounds attend a weekly ritual together to appease possessing *zar* (Eresso, 2015). However, the preference of *zar* and other spirits for possessing women, *zar* as something that women can transmit to their children, and which allowed women to purchase jewellery, clothing and other special items, was evident in my own research.

Chickens, food and religious occasions

So far, I have attempted to describe the names and types of spirits that can be found in the region of study, and the difficulties there are in giving any a definite name, origin or intention. By observing and discussing the role of chickens in specific rituals or celebrations, I was able to uncover how people interact with these spirits, both alongside, and in conflict with, their religious beliefs. One of the first aspects of the intersection between spirit beliefs and religion I encountered was regarding the choice of chickens for the meal on Easter, Yohannes (New Year) and other religious feasts – the individual significance varied between households. I will discuss the importance of chickens and food in **[Food]** in more detail, but here I will focus on the relationships between these three. The ideal meat to break a period of religious fasting was described as a 'red, double-combed, cockerel'. Some practical reasons for the use of chickens were suggested, such as that they are a quick meat to slaughter and prepare. One female elder likened the position of chickens to Mary, saying '*like Mary is between people and god, so is the chicken – that is why it is the first animal to eat after two months of fasting'*. The relationship between hen and chicks is used in Christian imagery as motherly love (Bynum, 1977). An association between the chicken and Mary has also been made elsewhere in the context of motherhood or domestic life in Christian essays and art (Boss, 2000; Musacchio, 1997), although I have not found it appearing in this capacity in sources about Africa.

People did not try to explain the preference for a double-combed, rather than single-combed, cockerel, but attempt to do so for the choice of red chickens. Both Kegne, the elder in Bahir Dar, and Deres, the priest in Medamma, emphasised that the

preference for red chickens for Easter was due to personal interests of people, and had no Christian basis. Kegne told us '*it is not dictated by the Bible',* however, even in his own house, he was unable to deviate from these practices, due to the beliefs of his family. '*It is the wuqabi amlak* (a type of spirit)*… even I don't slaughter black chickens because my daughters don't want to eat it.'* This '*wuqabi amlak'* is generally expressed as a sort of personal preference, or distaste for particular things. In the case of these religious occasions, the avoidance of black chickens was a stronger motivation than the choice of red chickens, which could be replaced with red and white spotted, or even white chickens, if necessary. The *wuqabi* was said to 'fight' or 'shake' people if they eat black chickens. Others explained it in terms of the *qolle* – '*I just don't eat – I don't know, the qolle does not accept black... [the qolle] is not visible, but when you do something for holidays, they come taste everything'.* Some people distanced themselves from these beliefs, describing them as 'superstition' that others believed in - '*There are people who believe in wuqabi amlak, zar and qolle… those people do not eat black chickens because they believe in this*'. The significance of the colours black, white and red, are repeated in both the use of chickens in religious and spiritual matters, but also with reference to people, as this conversation with Geteneh, an elder in Anestenya Wenz, demonstrates:

G: We don't buy black chickens.. no-one likes black chickens.. maybe she [referring to me] thinks 'but they are also black?'

[laughter]
Me: No, I have learnt that Ethiopians are 'red'

H: What about other black things?

G: We wear black clothes when someone dies, it is not always a sign of an evil thing

This idea of black as a funeral colour was unusual, as generally rural people wear white clothing for funerals. However, the association of black with death, or other bad things was common. People were usually described as being 'red' like *habesha*, 'white' like *ferenjis* and 'black' like other Africans, this is perceived as a negative or 'ugly' thing [see the discussion about the relationships between Amhara and the rest of Africa]. Some people argued that the dislike of the colour black was to do with their use in sorcery, for example one person told me: '*the reason [people don't like black] is t'enqway (*witches) *use black chickens for doing bad things to people – people who are sick from evil things, 'saytan', t'enqway use black chickens..'*

This echoes work by both Boddy and Turner, which emphasis the symbolic aspects of these colours. Turner describes a system of three colours among the Ndembu, which hold particular significance. White is associated with purity or goodness, red with blood, and black with death and lust, which can lead to witchcraft and sorcery (1967). It is possible for them to hold multiple meanings, thus 'whiteness' can be associated with milk, ritual purity and leprosy, "for it is well known that the sacred, the numinous, the holy, are dangerous as well as beneficent" (Turner, 1962, p. 135). Boddy (1989) demonstrates how the value of colour may be associated with objects, such as the purity of white with sugar, milk and rice, but also with the spirits. Thus the white *jinn* are benign, the red, associated with blood and fertility, are capricious and pleasure-seeking, and the black, are associated with grave disease, and even death.

Many people associated their avoidance of black chickens with their own personal preferences, the *wuqabi* or *qolle*. The elder Kegne tried instead to explain this

attitude in line with Christian beliefs. '*Black belongs to the devil – the reason behind people not liking black chickens, has a religious background. Kayin and Abel (Cain and Abel) – both made sacrifices, and God accepts the sacrifice of Abel, the good son, and not Kayin, and the black crow, [it] accepts the sacrifice of Kayin'.* This is similar to the story found in the Quran, in which Allah accepts the sacrifice of one son of Adam, and not the other, leading him to kill his brother in a fit of jealousy. Allah sends a crow (or raven), which scratches the earth, to show him how to cover the dead body of his brother (Quran, 5:31). While the crow does not appear in the standard English Bibles, the Ethiopian Orthodox church Bible may contain different passages, similar to that of the Quran.

Chickens and other occasions

The eating of chickens on Christian religious occasions is widespread, with a focus on the consumption of the chicken to break the fast. However, other dates were identified as significant occasions on which chickens had to be slaughtered. We heard before from Eyasu, about the *tist* determining dates on which it must be given something it has stated that it lacked on particular holidays. This may be one way in which shortages around the time of holidays may be made up for at another time, allowing people to delay fulfilling social obligations in a way that is culturally acceptable.

Saint days, such as Maryam (the 21st of the month) and Sane Mikael (the 12th of the month of Sane, the 19th of June in the Gregorian calendar) may be particularly significant dates for a number of households. For Maryam, people celebrate once a month by eating porridge that is only used for this specific purpose. Only members

of the household may eat from this pot, and the ingredients are also kept separate from other household supplies. Special ingredients, such as *kolo* (a snack made of toasted grains) and *nug* (a seed, crushed and rolled into balls), are consumed. Across the wider Amhara region it was reported that chickens were also sacrificed – '*this kind of ceremony takes place from Bure to Markos, they kill red and young male chickens, and sprinkle blood using a piece of cloth.'*

Tsegaye, who lived in Korabta, spoke of the arrival of the tist on Sane Mikael '*some kind of tist or zar occurs on that day. I have this kind of tist… a grand tist. Before it starts it makes me yawn. It always happens on the eve of sane Michael… we keep a white gabi (woven scarf) in the box – this clothes is for special ceremonies – on that day the tist is pleased by us bringing out the clothes and tälla'.* The ceremony of slaughtering chickens for Sane Michael was called '*magorat'*. This was the closest description I heard of something resembling the zar possession rituals, although they claimed that it had no longer survived due to the communist regime (Freeman, 2002). During this ceremony, it was described to me that people would display 'unnatural' behaviour, cry out loudly, dance, drink araqi, and others would come together and clap, and beat 'dibi', leather drums and in the morning they would sacrifice a chicken. It is believed those who do this must continue the tradition, as if they stop, it would bring bad luck to the family. This may have been why Tsegaye expressed so strongly the consequences of the church's intervention in these matters 'N*ow I am suffering because I failed to fulfil what the tist demands of me. Let it kill me, I can't cross the priests doctrine.'* In the final section of this chapter, I consider in more depth the conflict between these belief systems.

Sacrifice of chickens

While the sacrifice of chickens on most occasions was related to consumption in the home, slaughtering in Tirr (January), was more explicitly spoken of in terms of sacrifice at the river. Sacrifice was spoken of in terms of 'silet' (promise). Silet might refer to promises made to the church, which I described in [**Extensive**], in which people would promise one chicken to the church if all their chickens survived a disease, and treatment given to chickens in the form of *tsebel* (holy water) or *imnet* (ash produced at the church from the burning of incense etc.). The church was also turned to for health of humans, and people may drink only holy water, or stay in special places near the church to be healed of diseases. Instead of making promises to the 'tabot' (the replica of the Ark of the Covenant that is kept at the church), people may also make promises to a social group, or to spirits of the river, mountains or large trees in their landscape.

The social 'silet' may not necessarily involve slaughter of chickens or other animals, but did involve some communal feasting. For Meskel, (the finding of the true cross), one woman described a village feast which aimed to bring good fortune to the cattle – *'in my town in Mecha, all villagers bring the cattle together, and in every house collect flour, bake some kind of bread, squeeze it with butter and all the villagers (men and women) rotate around cattle three times, and finally they feast.. [we] do this on Meskerem 17 (Meskel, the True Cross).. nowadays people only sprinkle tsebel'.*

In Korabta, they described this ceremony with chickens, instead of the bread – '*in Meskerem, you have to rotate three times your chicken and animals – you bring all your livestock to one place, and you rotate your chicken around it, and then slaughter*

it. Nobody kills the chicken until it has gone through this ceremony… that chicken is not one that you buy for New Year. [it is at] the early stage of development. For the purpose of this you don't use boiled water to remove feathers, you take off the whole skin… and you throw that skin in the middle of the cows, and take them to grazing area. Some people burn the chicken in the place which you slaughtered it... then you come home and eat the one that you bought for the holidays. This is a kind of ceremony which makes people very happy. This is the time where you meet all the members of the family. We do this early in the morning, and nobody moves until that ceremony is finished'. They joked about the choosing of the chicken for this ceremony, that if you buy a chicken too large for the ceremony, you say it is fit for the livestock (suggesting they were good livestock that deserved this larger sacrifice).

The river is a significant place for sacrifice of chickens. Early in my fieldwork, I observed the Tirr sacrifice at the Nile River, known locally as 'Abay' or 'Ghion', as described at the start of this chapter. Those I spoke to gave some examples of the reasons for '*silet*' at the river – for good fortune, curing disease, or addressing spiritual problems. This does not occur only at the Abay, but at small local rivers as well. While Kegne described people worshipping spirits of the mountains and the trees, only a few articulated this to me, saying '*people worship some tree, put butter, kill chicken, and give 'mekenet' (a colourful scarf usually used as belt) around the tree...',* or '*people believe in some cultural things – like doing silet for Abay and 'dngay' (rock or stone) - not only for stone, do also for trees, if there is a big tree or a big stone, people kill chickens in that place.'*

As the meat is eaten, and the blood is either drained into the ground or the river during these sacrifices, some people were keen to express the importance of the blood itself to the ceremony – *'it needs to have blood fall there', 'you need blood', 'what you want is the blood'*. This is certainly consistent with the interaction that occurs with these spirits when blood is accidentally spilled in those places, which I discuss in more detail below. While the spirits of these places can be powerful forces of good (sacrificing to river), people form a long-term commitment – once blood is given, it must always been given. Blood ties are also significant in the consumption of meals for particular occasions – as Tigist describes in the final section of this chapter, not sharing blood may exclude people from eating with the family group they reside with.

The slaughter and consumption of chickens reinforced relationships between people, and between people and the spirits in their immediate or wider landscape. A good example of this was given when I spoke to one family about the practice of slaughtering chickens for guests. They argued that it was not a common thing to do, but that it may occur due to a fear of the tist of the guest and host colliding. '*Either the son or daughter comes home, and woman or daughter have some kind of tist, they slaughter because of fear tist might collide.. when this happens some disease might transfer'*. A male guest in the home told us that it happens, '*I have this experience in my family. My father's sister lives in Fogera, when we meet, I feel sick, so when I visit they always slaughter chicken... and I do not go often, maybe once a year..'*. Difficult relationships between family members can thus be explained as resulting from the interaction of external agents such as the '*tist*', and can be addressed or eased during unavoidable events, by cooking a meal associated with

showing respect, the *doro wot*. Without this meal, the man would be unable to visit the house, as he explains '*so if I want to visit family' I cannot do it in fasting time, because the thing which you fear will happen, what will make it evaporate, other than this chicken?*'

Chickens as a cure

I have discussed the role of chickens in pleasing the spirits with a proper celebration of religious occasions, and as an offering made for improvement in health and fortune. Chickens also play a direct role in curing disease that may or may not be caused by spirits. A number of forms of 'traditional' (non-pharmaceutical) treatment can be found around Mecha and Bahir Dar. Herbal medicine is one form of traditional medicine that is regulated by the state, and practitioners are registered, with expertise in knowledge of herbal remedies. Some poultry products may form part of these treatments, as practical solutions without a spiritual or religious component, such as swallowing raw egg to 'cool down the heart' and ease a serious cough. These practices, and practitioners, are distinct from the use of chickens in mediation with spirits to improve health.

People may turn to the Church for treatment, such as making *silet* (promise) and using *tsebel* (holy water) and *imnet* (ash) from the Church, or amulets containing protective words from scripture. While many said that the priests were involved in treatments requiring interacting with spirits, Deres, the priest from Medamma, denied that 'holy' priests would do this, claiming it was the work of naïve trainees, who don't know that what they are doing is superstition. Both *däbtära* and *t'enqway*, are believed to be able to treat illnesses that have a spiritual origin, or have proved

resistant to Western treatment. It was not unusual for multiple types of treatment to be utilised at once, such as taking pharmaceutical treatment from the clinic, alongside tsebel, and the wearing of amulets. The need to take some form of action for treatment is emphasised by Reynolds Whyte who describes people using multiple methods to treat disease (1997, p. 25). First, medication from the clinic was used to treat symptoms. If this failed to alleviate suffering, diviners were required to address the underlying cause. If this treatment did not work, families were encouraged to seek help elsewhere, taking alternative courses of action until success was achieved.

I consider in more detail here, the illnesses that could be caused or cured through interaction with the spirits. These illnesses may be caused by sorcery or the evil eye, as one man explained in Korabta: '*sometimes, if someone has some kind of rivalry, he will do something bad on the other by employing the 'yeferesu kesawoch' (those who have disobeyed the way of the priests). The victim will go to another witch, and will be ordered to do this sacrifice to Abay… this often happens when people disagree over land, if one gets more [land] he is in danger, if one is jealous, if someone does some kind of 'wulesh' or 'digimpt' on you, you will have to go the witch and do this kind of thing…'.*

The giving of blood to the river in *silet*, is also important when treating other health problems by appeasing the spirit directly, through the offering of blood or other substance. An accident on the road, however small, is caused by a *saytan* in that place, who wants blood. Here, people are not putting spirits onto you, as in the case of the evil eye, but it is the spirits themselves that are dangerous if you expose yourself to them, such as by shedding blood. If the *saytan* is not distracted, it will

follow that person's blood and cause them to be sick for a long time. The most common distraction was to break an egg on the road, so that '*the saytan will lick this instead of blood*'. This may even be done if cattle fall and break their bones. In some places, a chicken is slaughtered in the place of the accident, and unlike the chicken used in the mazor ceremony, this can be eaten, as only the blood is required at the site. Broken bones may also be hastened to heal with '*yedoro shorpa*' (chicken soup), made with a young chicken, the meat crushed with the bone, and cooked with oil and onion, and Young also mentions eating chickens as a form of treatment (1977).

Eggs are also put onto the road as part of '*aynet'*. This ceremony may be used to cure a few specific ailments – problems with children's eyes, or sores on the head, some kinds of rash, and for shyness, which is associated with when the child has the evil eye put on them, and is unwilling to meet people, which is seen as problematic in a society in which sociality is extremely important. The egg from a *qeb* (pullet) must be used. *Zagol* (cowrie shells, found at the market and used to decorate leather objects), are crushed and mixed with lemons, and the egg, and all are placed together on the road near the house. A more complex procedure was also described:

> *For the aynet, the treatment is three days. On one day you break the egg and take out the yolk – the watery parts remain. You put the crushed zagol in the watery part, then put on the head of the child, then you add the lemon – then it starts to boil by itself, and the watery part comes down the face of the child'.*

Slaughtering chickens, and breaking eggs, were not the only forms of treatment that chickens were used for. A ceremony usually described only as '*mazor*' (to rotate), was

suggested as a cure for medical problems. In this ceremony, a *balagenda* rotates a chicken around the person suffering – this could be someone who was sick, or a woman experiencing a difficult labour. The *balagenda* may choose a chicken based on the 'horoscope' of household members [see notes on numerology]. Others know what colour was needed: 'you don't need always to go to the [*t'enqway* or *däbtära*] to conduct ceremony, some people do themselves. They know what colour chicken their *wuqabi* needs, and will buy either black or white chickens.' Some more explicitly linked it to the mother's *zar* determining the colour of the chicken used for the ceremony.

The chicken is rotated around the head and thrown behind the sick person. People spoke of instantaneous cures – '*Once, my baby fell sick, and my father took his grandchild to the däbtära. We were ordered to rotate a white chicken, and throw behind the child. The child was almost dying but she recovered immediately. The disease was immediately transferred to the chicken, and the chicken fell sick'.* Some explanations explicitly spoke about the relationship between mother and child in this ceremony – '*If the child gets sick, the mother rotates the chicken on the head of the sick child, and then rotates it on herself, so the things that makes him sick will transfer to her. This kind of ritual only mothers do for their children'.*

This chicken used for this ceremony occupies an important space in the household. It can never be eaten - '…t*he money you get from sale of eggs you don't eat, you only use for buying coffee – you don't eat this chicken, and even when it stops laying eggs, you sell it, or let it die in your home. Even if you hatch the eggs you don't eat this, you can only eat the third generation – if you eat the chicken itself, and its chicks, you will*

die'. Women described using the money from selling the chicken to buy scarves, embroider their traditional dresses, buy necklaces of silver, or other materials for beautifying themselves, similar to items given to women to appease the *zar* spirits in the rituals described above. However, in this case, it is not necessarily the woman that falls ill, and neither does the treatment deal with appeasing the *spirit*, rather it transfers the disease from a place where it causes danger to somewhere less harmful (inside the person that is ill to the chicken, or from a child to its mother).

Reminick describes a similar ceremony amongst the Manze Amhara as '*zur*', (also derived from the same verb '*mazor*'), but involving a particularly fine sheep that is saved for *zar.* Whenever a person was sick, the *zur* is led around the patient several times, whilst members of the family promise tribute. As he describes it 'As the *zur* encircles the patient, so the *zar's* power encircles the sick one at once showing the *zar's* presence and lending some of its power to overcome the illness'. In this case, the sheep is kept until it is about to die, and only then slaughtered and offered as tribute. Only family members may eat the meat, and the skin, instead of being sold to local traders, is kept for the family's personal use (1973, p. 187).

Another form of treatment which transfers the disease, rather than appeasing the spirit, is *denkara* (also *denqara, denkero*). Using the works of Michel Leiris, '*Un Rite Médico-magique Ethiopia: le Jet du Danqara*' (1935) and '*La Croyance aux Génies "Zar" en Ethiopie du Nord*' (1938), Young (1975b) and Natvig (1987) describe the denkara sacrifice. Someone who wishes to free themselves from a sickness caused by zar performs a sacrifice known as *derka*, using a chicken bearing the colour and markings preferred by the *zar*. A second sacrifice, *denkero*, supplements this by

drawing off the disease substance (Leiris 1935 in Young, 1975b). In the later paper, Leiris describes *denqara* as preceeding the sacrifice made to the zar spirits, in which an animal that is ill is slaughtered, and thrown into a hole or river. Through this rite, the bad spirits are expelled, and the illness transferred to the first person that passes by the corpse of the animal (Leiris, 1938 in Natvig, 1987, p. 684).

A similar account of *denkara* was given to me, although the place in which the chicken was thrown was at crossroads, because '*many people walk over [the crossroads], [they] believe disease will transfer to someone else.'* The use of black chickens is important in this ceremony, and the sex of the chickens is related to that of the 'patient' – a male black chicken for a male, and a hen for a woman. '*The patient and the däbtära go together to that place – the däbtära rotates [the chicken] on the head of the patient, the däbtära throws it on the road, and the patient will not turn back to look.'* Like the other ceremonies, the concern here is with transmission of the disease to the chicken, or another person. If the chicken dies after is has been thrown, a person is deemed more likely to recover. People may even choose to take the chicken – '*Some brave people will take that chicken to their home, they believe it is good for production. Someone cowardly will run away when they see that ceremony going on there. People are afraid that the disease of the patient will be transferred [to them]'.* Like with many of these beliefs, there is ambiguity and fear – '*others who are brave, they consider it a superstition they don't believe… but even if they say this, they will not eat the chicken! People are half-way, here in our culture, no-one wants to eat a chicken that has been used for mazor'.*

Why the chicken?

I have tried to show that the chicken is an important part of relationships between humans and the spirit world. For these practices, the use of any other animal but the chicken was rarely, if ever, mentioned. One reason for the use of chickens to break fasts is that it is practical – *'the slaughter of sheep takes time, women prepare chicken for immediate consumption... can do this easily because it is quick'*. Likewise, whether sacrificing an animal in the river or elsewhere in the environment, the chicken is easily transported and quickly drained of blood. Larger animals may represent too much of a family's wealth to sacrifice, although there were specific situations in which they may be used.

> '*People sacrifice goats, for qolle and eat it together. The women don't eat this, only the men eat this. When the drought has appeared, people collect money and buy a cow with many colours, and slaughter together to eat... women not involved at all.* [Even to cook?] *No, [food is cooked] on the fire. Only men do this [sacrifice] and eat [the meat] – for drought, epidemics, when elders die rapidly – when something unusual happens, they blame it on the qolle. This ceremony is done under the big tree or on the mountain, they do something in the same place, every time.'*

Animals may be spiritually ambiguous – while the elder Kegne and his friends described domestic animals like sheep and cattle as being free from spirits, they suggested chickens and goats fell into a similar category as wild animals, such as snakes, or ants, which were associated with saytan, or could have spirits dwelling on them. There is a horror of eating wild animals, with the exception of *jigara* (guinea

fowl), and *qok* (described to me as a red spotted bird, which looks like a small hen - possibly francolin or quail, both which can be found in Ethiopia). Guinea fowl, francolin and quail belong to the same order as chickens, Galliformes, and are commonly referred to as gamebirds, so it might be that in Ethiopia these wild birds are similarly considered part of a group of birds which are acceptable for consumption. While tunjit was recommended as a way to keep snakes from the house, chickens and goats can be kept for domestic purposes as their status *'doesn't mean you don't have to eat it, just that people don't appreciate them much, compared to other animals'.* This dual perception of chickens can also be found elsewhere, for example in Sudan, the chicken is perceived as dirty, but is kept for its eggs, which are 'clean' (Boddy, 1989, p. 61).

Another animal with magical significance is the hyena, which can take both natural and supernatural forms (Rasmussen, 2013). In the walled city of Harar in the south of Ethiopia, it holds special significance (Baynes-Rock, 2013). However, in the Amhara region it the hyena is associated with belief in the '*buda*', a spirit that has the ability to transform itself into a hyena and prey upon the blood of humans. *Buda* is usually associated with ostracised groups, such artisans or '*tayib*' (craftsmen), and Ethiopian Jews. Weissleder records that it is said '*not all buda are craftsmen, but all craftsmen are buda'* (1965). The preference of the buda for charred meat, and the Jewish dietary laws prohibiting the consumption of blood have led to the Amhara Orthodox Christians accusing Ethiopian Jews of also being buda (Edelstein, 2002). Being *buda* may manifest itself in physical conditions, such as thinness, light skin and eye deformities, or in unusual sociality, such as being too friendly (Reminick, 1974). The '*evil eye*', which brings misfortune to others, is inherited, but abilities such as were-

hyenas require special medicines which must be learnt (Weissleder, 1965). Recent references to the *evil eye* and its effects on health and agriculture, show it still features in Ethiopian life (Hannig, 2014; Kebede & Zizzo, 2015). Two young male friends of mine, Assefa and Sisay, also told me of two different experiences with buda. After nearly losing a piece of my calf to a dog, walking through Bahir Dar one evening, Assefa and I got to talking about the dogs and hyenas around the city. He told me about a hyena that had eaten an infected dog, and in its diseased state was hanging around his local church during the daytime – extremely unusual behaviour for an animal only usually seen in the city at night. People killed it, cut the meat and skin into little pieces, wrapped them in plastic and put in cloth bags to wear around their neck, as protection from the *buda*.

Sisay, a student at the university, told me story of his own brush with the *buda*. We were discussing how he felt a conflict between his education and his beliefs, and he told me about a time he pretended to his mother that he had been under the evil eye. He had spent some time in a place known to have lots of *buda,* and came home complaining of stomach ache. She immediately believed that at that place he had been put under the evil eye. It is believed that if you have been, you would be unable to say the word '*buda*' so she asked him to do it, and he told me that pretended he couldn't say the word. As a further test, she lit incense, as it is believed to drive the spirits away, and he started sneezing when she brought the smoke close to him. She called one neighbour, and then another, a strong man, who would be capable of dealing with the increased strength of the person under the influence of the *buda.* They bound his feet and arms and put his face in the smoke. He complained that they wouldn't believe he was joking, and thought it was the *buda* at work, giving him the

idea to *pretend* it was *buda*. This account of his treatment for *buda* is similar to those described by Reminick in 'The Evil Eye Belief among the Amhara of Ethiopia' (1974). Reminick also outlines other treatments for buda, and preventions that still occur, such as shaving the hair of young children into particular shapes, addressing them by a name of a different gender, and spitting into their faces.

While in these examples people take their own action against buda, the church may also help protect people. We spoke to Genet, and her four-year old daughter Lielit, who both wore leather pouches around their necks. Genet was thin and drawn from TB infection, but was cheerful and chatty company. She explained their necklaces – inside hers was writing in Ge'ez, in red pen, which she got from the debeteras, whilst Lielit's contained 'imnet', ash from the church. Genet believed that the necklaces protected them against buda, and kept them safe, from diseases that the doctors may not know about – '*it helps to keep us in a good mood if we are sick. It is connected to spirit, if we are uneasy [not for diseases of the liver or thing like this]'.*

Change

One interesting thing that emerged during these conversations was that these practices were often described as becoming less relevant. While it is likely that some people may have felt that they needed to deny their continued participation in sacrifices or other spirit practices, because they were speaking to an outsider, were unable to talk about them in front of their peers, or wanted to appear 'modern and educated', I heard a few debates between younger and elder members of the family, where the children had stopped the traditions of their parents. Contacts who lived in urban areas, such as government bureau employees, were surprised that they

continued, and even the elder, Kegne, could not believe that people felt compelled to slaughter chickens on the religious holidays, even if they did not like to eat the meat themselves. Both he and Deres, a priest in Medamma, strongly expressed their concern at the continuance of these practices, which they viewed as superstitions.

Attempts to abolish the *zar* practice is long-standing, and not limited to the Church. In the 1830s, missionaries noted orders by the King to abolish the zar ceremony (Knapf in Natvig, 1987). Comparing his experiences in 1953-4, to these accounts Messing (1958), describes the cult as being entirely supressed in Addis Ababa, and concealed from foreign visitors elsewhere. In addition membership had shifted from 'respectable' members of society in Gondar, to '*poor Amhara, half-Sudanese Muslims, and ex-slaves*', who used it to achieve upward social mobility (Messing, 1958, pp. 1124–5). Part of the mission of the Derg was to modernise the 'backward and superstitious peasantry', leaving behind only the religious practices of Orthodox Christianity and Islam (Freeman, 2002, p. 39).

The Ethiopian Orthodox church condemns all spirits outside the realm of its teaching as Satanic, and requiring Christian exorcism, such as by *tsebel* (holy water) (Teshome-Bahire, 2000). Deres described attempts by the Church to encourage change – '*the Church needs people to refrain from adultery, theft and practising superstition… those who visit the t'enqways. The government doesn't care about these things, only advises people to become more economical, doesn't worry about traditions, because the government itself is a mixed one.'* Although he thought more people now listened to the religious teachings of the Church, he felt that people did not behave in the way advised. However, he acknowledged that there were changes occurring – '*the*

availability of clinics everywhere, plus the strong teaching of the church, brings this change… nowadays the Church is well equipped with priests who can teach the people... the growing number of highly educated priests in every Church has changed this'. He suggested that the arrival of other religions in the area had forced the church to strengthen people's faith '*nowadays there arrives many religious sects, and the Orthodox Church works hard to keep her believers in her embrace'.*

While some people answered that the practice had stopped because of the position of the Church, others expressed more of a concern with this intervention. As one woman told me in Korabta – '*still people sacrifice for the Abay, but now this habit decreases because of priests' warning. It is strictly restricted by priests – but if we deny this [sacrifice] something bad will happen to himself or the family... it has decreased but not stopped'.* Failure to continue with these practices could result in misfortune – as we sat in a *shay bet* in Korabta one day, a father and daughter spoke amongst the group:

[daughter] *They slaughter for Abay, only those who have silet (promise) for this.. if someone stops this habit it will not be good for them… [they] start because the promise to do if something good happens..*
[father] (looking uncomfortable] *I don't like this thing…*
[daughter] *my grandmother used to do this, mother wanted to continue, but my father forced her to stop.. and something bad happened.*

The 'something bad' she refers to is the illness of her mother, which has forced her to stop her education, to help support her family, despite reaching Grade 10. Smaller misfortunes may also be attributed to not following traditions. Spending some time

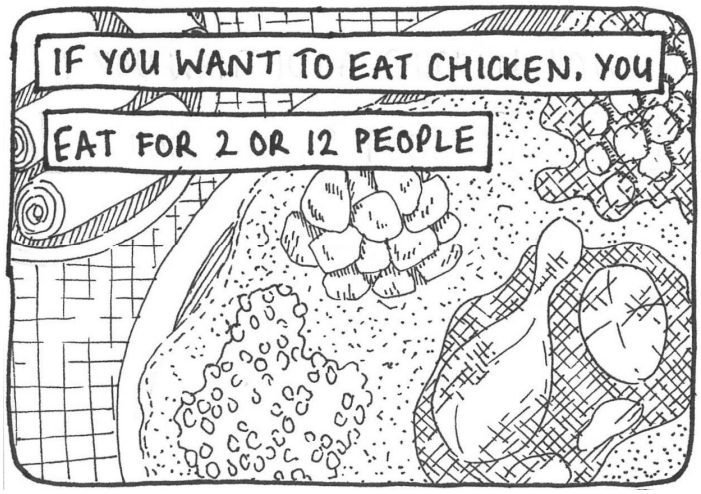
with young women in Medamma one morning, one woman explained to her friend – '*please respect Sunday, the sacred day – don't fetch water on this day… if you keep fetching water on this day, [the ants] will keep coming.. the ants are a sign of this, of the devil*'. However, her imploring her not to sweep the house on this day was met with a pragmatic response '*whatever can happen, I will still sweep the floor, if I don't do this, the waste of chickens will make the house ugly*'.

This young woman, Tigist, also shocked her friends by telling us of her attempts to challenge some of these beliefs. For *tirr,* some households have a tradition of cooking doro wot, which may only be eaten by blood relatives of that family. A woman may become a member of a family by having a child with the male household head, but as Tigist was living with her mother, stepfather and half-siblings, she was unable to eat the chicken on these occasions. '*You are not my blood*' her step-father had told her, and she felt hurt that she was separated from her family in this way. '*One day, I ate this doro wot. If someone eats it that isn't a member of the family, the man will be sick, and I wanted him to fall sick! I didn't do it from greed, I ate it deliberately because I wanted to test whether he would get sick, and he didn't, it is 'wushet' (lies)!*' Her friends were astonished by her daring, telling her '*I wouldn't do these things, if I do them, I will die.'* Some were more vocal in their need for proof for these practices - one young man, who worked as a chicken trader, told us '*they say 'this is not good', 'this is bad' but they don't have any real evidence of this.'*

Many others argued that the presence of clinics and better education had reduced the need for these practices – '*the trend [for mazor] has dwindled, but there are still some people who rotate the chickens. Some people, in some places… some years ago*

we had so many witches everywhere, but now civilisation changes everything, we only go for tsebel [holy water] or the clinics.. The time itself has made them vanish, now people consider those [t'enqways] as thieves' [Woman in her early 20s, Korabta]. It may also be the case that the presence of the service providers themselves impedes these practices – while the use of the ceremonies during labour was described by a few people, they claimed that the presence of midwives at births meant that people were unable to do it. In addition, it was reported that more people gave birth in the clinic, rather than in the home, although this may be that in the areas of study there is a clinic in the centre of the village, and so it is relatively accessible for many households.

Kegne told us '*this kind of culture will not leave Ethiopia, it will live on with the people. I wish these things would disappear, there is science and better knowledge now*'. However, during the course of the conversation, others mentioned that there were many other traditional practices, such as female circumcision and early marriage, which seemed more harmful in comparison to sacrificing chickens, and so there was no need to reject this – '*Practices in the area will have a reason. The [local offices of the cultural department or other government offices] haven't studied them because their employees are heavily influenced by the church, instead of talking to the locals, they say all traditional practices are bad, and ignore [them]'.*



Food

It's Easter, and the fast is finally over. This morning I shared a simple breakfast of mango, bread and jam with my host family while helping them prepare to receive guests. I've been invited to a friend's family home early in the day, so I'm scrubbed up and sent off in a friend's bajaj. We pass dogs gnawing on fresh bones on the street, and groups of people, dressed up in their finest traditional clothes, walking to visit friends and neighbours. The sound of music, clapping and laughter drifts over the fences of the compounds around me. As I call through the open gate, my hosts, the family of a friend of mine, greet me warmly – the women hold my shoulders and kiss me on both cheeks, and bring me inside the house. I am ushered to a space on the sofa, and am soon engaged in conversation in a mixture of English and Amharic – his niece is going to sit her exams soon, and my visits give her a good excuse to practice. Around us, my friend and his father are dressed smartly in their suits, and the women

in the traditional embroidered white clothes. His mother and older sisters take the main role in serving, and do not sit on the sofas with us, but hover around the edge, or sit on a stool where they can easily move around.

On Friday they fasted all day, and attended the all-night ceremony at the church from 6pm, and maintained a strict fast yesterday, so they are looking forward to the feast ahead. They do not slaughter animals themselves, but on the holidays some men wander around neighbourhoods and do this job, in exchange for the skins. I can smell the wonderful cooking coming from the back of the house, and it is not long before their housemaid is going from person to person with a jug and basin for us to wash our hands. I am served some bread and minced lamb cooked with onions in a small plate, and some cola – some of the others are drinking tella, but even after all this time, they are wary of serving it to me in case it makes me sick. Usually, the main dishes are served on an injera on a large communal platter, but for occasions like this, with many guests, it is difficult for everyone to sit around a single plate, and eat together. After the first course of lamb, a basket of injera, rolled and cut into pieces about the size of a fist, is passed around, and we spread them out on our plates, to act as a base for the meat courses. The first meat to go on there is some 'beg tibs', pieces of lamb, fried simply with onions and chilli peppers. Next, the main dish of the day, the 'doro wot', a thick stew, dark red with berbere, a mixture of spices. As a special guest I'm given a thigh piece, and a boiled egg. They offer more helpings of the injera and meat, but eventually I satisfy my hosts that I've eaten enough.

As more guests arrive, I thank and greet all the family, and promise to return soon. I turn down the offer of the bajaj driver that passes me – I've been invited to two more

friends to visit, before I go home and eat doro wot with my family tonight, and I need the exercise!

Adherence to the fasting and feasting of the Christian calendar is an important way in which religious identity is demonstrated. More than this, the choice of food, and how the food is shared gives some insight into the relationships within a household or wider community. Food plays an important role in the construction of the modern Ethiopian identity, both in opposition to outsiders describing exotic feasts[27] or devastating famine[28], and within the country, emphasising the unique and special nature of both the foods themselves and the customs through which it is shared. Chickens play an important role in this, they are essential for breaking the fast, and ensuring that the spirits are appeased. In addition, the adoption of the Amhara dish

[27] For example Laurens van der Post describing 'endless raw meat banquets' in which the meat was dipped in berbere, a sauce '*so fierce that it makes the ears bleed*' (1977, p. 29). Hayes, in '*The Source of the Blue Nile'* emphasises the extreme nature of food in then Abyssinia: 'they are constantly passing from fasts which they observe with superstitious rigour to an excess of gluttony' (1905, p. 86). Reminick also describes the effect of the spicy food - a 'real man' relishes the high-powered effect of *qäy wat* – "*if the qäy wat doesn't make the eyes tear and the nose run it is not measuring up to the standards of Amhara culinary skill*" (1973, p. 125).

[28] Current Western perceptions of food in Ethiopia have been shaped by the famines of the early 1970s and 1980s, brought to the attention of the west by Jonathan Dimblebey's film "The Unknown Famine", and a short film by Mohamed Amin and Michael Buerk, shown on the BBC evening news on the 23rd October 1984. Governments were forced to acknowledge their responsibilities for aid, and donations were unprecedented, due to publicity efforts such as Band Aid (Hancock, 1985; Jansson, Harris, & Penrose, 1987). In the years that followed, titles such as '*Breakfast in Hell'* (Harris, 1987) and '*A Year in the Death of Africa'* (Gill, 1986) described both experiences of those working in those environments as doctors or reporters, and criticised the role that governments had played in failing to address the underlying problems leading to the famine. As Gill writes, to the embarrassment of Ethiopians today, the result of this coverage is that now, 'instead of its glorious past and rich culture, we now assoiciate Ethiopia with famine. It has become the iconic poor country' (Gill, 2010, p. 3). More recent droughts have affected food security in some areas of the country, continuing this image of the country.

of *doro wot,* a spicy chicken stew, as a national dish, also gives some insight into the complex nature of the construction of an 'Ethiopian' identity.

Fasting

Food, religion and identity are closely tied. The ways in which food is eaten, or not eaten, plays an important role in different Ethiopian identities. There are around 200 fast days in the calendar of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, although only the clergy are expected to keep these. Boylston describes the 56-day Lenten fast, and the three-day Fast of Nineveh, and every Wednesday and Friday as the mandatory fasts for the laity (2012, p. 81). In addition the saint day associated with the *tabot* (the replica of the Ark of the Covenant) in the local church would be kept by the immediate parish. The sacred days identified by my respondents, across the fieldsites in Mecha and Bahir Dar Zuria are listed below:

Sacred Days

3rd	Bata	15th	Ch'arkos	27th	Medanelem
5th	Abo	16th	Kidane Meret	29th	Bal ygziaber
7th	Selassie	19th	Gebrel	Every Saturday and Sunday	
12th	Mikael	21st	Mariam		

The nature of the 'fast' varies between individuals. At the very least, one should not consume any animal products on a fasting day (with the usual exceptions for children, the sick, and pregnant or *aras* women). Many do not eat or drink anything until noon, or the Liturgy is finished – at 3pm on weekdays, or 9am at the weekend (Boylston, 2012, p. 81). In addition, people are expected to abstain from heavy physical labour, such as ploughing the fields (Aspen, 2001). The decision to maintain a proper fast has a moral aspect, and is reportedly used by farmers to draw distinctions between the

urban and rural populations, for example farmers in Tigray described urban people as “self-centred, non-fasting and rich people, whereas rural people are strictly religious and poor” (Aklilu et al., 2008, p. 179). In my own research, people were surprised when Hiwot, my urban educated assistant, would not eat or drink before midday on fast days, whilst many of the farmers themselves would often take coffee earlier in the day, as they carried on with work that was considered ‘appropriate’. Boylston describes participation in fasting for Orthodox Christians of the Zege peninsula in Bahir Dar, as being able to provide “a constant grounding in their religious identity, a sense of belonging” and “enables people to take part in religious practice regardless of any other restrictions put upon them.” (2012, p. 96). Poluha suggests that an increased consciousness about their religion has led many Orthodox Christians to become stricter in their keeping of the fasts. For example, fasts that were previously categorized as ‘priests’’ fasts are observed by educated adults and young children in Addis, and fish is no longer considered a fasting food (2004, p. 163). This reaction to discussions about ethnic identity and power was also observed by Mains (2004), who suggested that rumours about changing drinking practices in Jimma was a form of emphasising differences between religious and social groups.

While fasting then allows people to emphasise and express their Christian identity, the preparation and eating of food demonstrates differences between Muslims and Orthodox Christians in the region. As Muslims and Christians slaughter their meat differently, they are not able to eat meat prepared by the other. Boyslton describes how eating meat at a Muslim wedding caused great consternation amongst his Christian friends, as his consumption of meat at Orthodox Christian houses had, until that date, been presenting an identity as Christian (2012, p. 92). The expected

behaviour of hospitality at weddings and christenings is demonstrated across these two groups by serving vegetarian dishes (Lyons, 2007).

Refusing to eat food outside of these religious rules could be seen as not showing appropriate respect, or deliberate signs of separation between people. For example, social stigma against artisans means that if artisans are guests in the home in non-artisan, they eat from a banana leaf or other item that can be disposed of the following morning (Mains, 2007). More extreme barriers against contact are described by Salamon for the Beta Israel, including standing on mats made of grass or leaves and keeping separate cups and plates for guests outside of the house (Salamon, 1999). I was rarely faced with situations in which I had to refuse offers of food, as many of the farmers themselves worried about how my weak foreign body could cope with local water or uncooked meat. When we visited an HIV-positive couple who produced chickens, Abebe left with a bowl of large white eggs. After first refusing out of politeness, it would have been seen as a slight against their HIV-positive status, and as a comment on their poverty and inability to show hospitality to guests.

Sharing food

The main way in which I spent my time with the farmers was sitting to share coffee and stories, after we had asked our questions about chickens. At this time, their family members or friends would visit, and the women would share their news or complaints, the prices in the market, or ask me questions about my own family. The importance of the 'coffee ceremony' or more simply, *buna* (coffee) in Ethiopia and amongst the diaspora has been written about in relation to the *zar* (Edelstein, 2002),

women's roles in public debate (Sagawa, 2006), the ancient traditions of the Oromo (Yedes, Clamons, & Osman, 2004) and group therapy (Loewy, Williams, & Keleta, 2002). Although there are some variations across the areas of Ethiopia in which it is performed, the nature of the coffee ceremony is similar to that which I observed in Mecha and Bahir Dar.

Figure 15. Field sketch of coffee ceremony materials

First the woman (and it is always a woman), sweeps and cleans the floor. In a small clay burner she places hot coals and some incense, which sends white spirals of smoke into the dark room. The items for the coffee ceremony – a small white table with a drawer, small coffee cups, a tall curved coffee pot (the 'jebena'), and tea spoons – are washed and set out. The jebena sits in a ring made from a string of pierced metal bottle tops. In a small stove, she places some more charcoal, and fans it to increase the heat. She lays down some chafi - a fragrant grass found near water, and sold in bundles on roadsides and at bus stations. On the stove she first roasts the coffee beans, pushing them across a slightly curved iron pan (the 'brumtad') with a piece of wood. As they turn from green to brown, the beans release a strong aroma, and satisfied they are sufficiently well-roasted, the woman pushes the brumtad towards those of use seated inside the house, so that we can appreciate the smell. Carefully,

she carries the pan out to the front of the house, where she pours the beans onto a flat stone surface, and expertly uses a heavy metal rod to grind the coffee straight back onto the brumtad. It is then poured into the jebena, water is added, and it placed onto the stove to boil. When the coffee has boiled long enough, she removes a bag of sugar from the drawer, places a large spoon of sugar into each cup, then moves the jebena from cup to cup, filling it to the very top. Today we're offered some popcorn, in a tall woven basket, to accompany our coffee. As the guests drink, the water is topped up in the coffee pot and placed back on to boil. All guests should stay for this second brew from the grounds, although it is best to stay and drink from all three brews (from fieldnotes)

Although coffee is drunk every day, it is not always as elaborate as I have described here. Much like the difference between an English 'cuppa' and 'afternoon tea', the level of formality of setting and serving, and accompanying food varies based on the occasion. On most occasions, an incense stick would be used, rather than an incense burner. The use of incense, and roasting the coffee in front of guests, is thought to promote health and drive out bad spirits (Edelstein, 2002, p. 161; Loewy et al., 2002). Folded away in some of the drawers was a tasselled green plastic mat, to use instead of fresh leaves or grasses. Many families did not have regular access to sugar, and would instead use salt or drink the coffee plain. The accompanying food might be some boiled field peas or grilled maize, or pieces of *injera* smeared with a paste made from berbere and water. On special occasions, such as saint days, the entire extended family might be present for the coffee ceremony.

It was a daily event for women, and gave them an opportunity to pause in their tasks for the day - although one man that I spoke to did express his frustration that all his wife seemed to do was sit inside and drink coffee while he was working in the field. The men, however, were at this time often to be found in the tella houses. Despite these variations, what remained the same was its function as a focal point for social time. Yedes and colleagues describe *buna* as 'a peacekeeping practice in the community… [an] opportunity for people to come together to share greetings, prayers, blessings and concerns...' (2004, p. 696). The women in their study describe coffee gatherings in their own words as "women's time—time to discuss issues, or even gossip! [a time to] . . . yell about things, [discuss] different issues about women's organization or family" (p683). In the southwest of Ethiopia, Sagawa (2006) argues that the control of the coffee ceremony by women allows them to be an active participant in rituals and discussion related to public matters, and alternatively, by failing to prepare coffee for guests, to shame her husband.

The coffee ceremony demonstrates how sharing a drink and a light snack is an occasion to gather together, and through the multiple brewings of coffee, spend unrushed time in conversation. A meal too, can 'provide cause for people to gather repeatedly, and so establishes a basic pattern of togetherness' (Boylston, 2013, p. 261). While Simmel argues that 'eating with one's fingers has something decidedly more individualistic about it than eating with a knife and fork, since it associates the individual more directly with matter and is the expression of a more unreserved desire' (1997, p. 132), I would argue that eating from the same plate, with your hands, is a greater demonstration of communal life. Although Simmel argues that only eating with cutlery shows conventions which establish distinctions between class and

status, eating with your hands also requires learning a code of rules that must be followed in order not offend your hosts and fellow diners. Eating from the communal plate consists not just of being able to put food in your mouth with your hand, but knowing to eat with your right hand, how to tear *injera* with just one hand, and knowing where to tear it from, not reaching over to the other side of the plate, and to studiously leave the choice pieces of meat, so that you may all generously offer them to one another towards the end of the meal. Learning both the physical skill and social rules of eating earnt me some degree of insider status. As they watched me eat *injera* with my hands, people would often laugh and say 'you're habesha now!'

Moreover, the shared eating of food has the ability to create connectedness. The eating of *injera* was said to 'loosen your tongue for Amharic'. These examples of how by eating *habesha* food, I was becoming *habesha*, is similar to the experiences of Janice Boddy in Sudan:

> "*To some extent it was thought that being non-Sudanese, I was precluded from eating Sudanese foods on a regular basis, as if in order to preserve my Westerness I must periodically consume Western foods in a Western manner. Whenever I ate kisra at communal meals, villagers would boast I had become Sudani, or better, Hofriyati*" (1989, p. 91)

This idea of shared consumption creating kinship is a powerful one. As Geissler and Prince explain: "if relatives are referred to as 'those who eat together', this does not just imply that one eats with relatives, but also that those one eats with can become

one's kin' (2010, p. 157). Hannig, in her work on childbirth in Ethiopia, demonstrates how sharing both food and bodily substances creates connectedness between the midwife and the woman given birth, polluting the midwife in the same way that an *aras* is during her seclusion (2014, p. 302). The association between food and body, is one of incorporation. As Boddy explains: *"making something originally external to oneself an integral part of one's body is a powerful metaphoric operation, at minimum signalling participating in villagers' or some other world of meaning. More tangibly, incorporation substantively maintains or alters a specific type of human being*" (1989, p. 91). Children nourished by the milk of one woman become 'milk children', full siblings, and are not permitted to marry (Boddy, 1989). The sharing of meals can also be used to consciously create bonds, such as wives into households, foster children or newcomers into a place, in order to make their blood more similar (Carsten, 2004; Geissler & Prince, 2010).

Thus, when Ethiopians sit to eat in a public place, and invite passing friends to join them for the meal with a shout of '*inebla!*' (we eat!), it is both a show of hospitality, and a way in which social bonds are renewed. The ultimate act of sharing food comes in the form of the gursha, a sign of affection, in which food is rolled in a parcel of *injera*, and fed by hand directly into a person's mouth. In this, both the physical and metaphorical aspects of food come together to demonstrate closeness between the two people.

Feasting

I consider now the actual foods that connect people. While most meals consist of the cheap and nutritious combination of *injera* and *shïro*, a spicy chickpea paste, special

occasions are celebrated with specific foods. Which of the religious and culturally significant days are celebrated may vary between regions. Saints days associated with a person's church may be celebrated in the urban area by inviting family, friends and neighbours for a feast of 'fasting food' – *misir wot* (lentil stew), *gomen* (a dark leaved local cabbage) and *atakilt* (mixed vegetables including potatoes, carrots and onions). In the rural areas, this is usually the day of the *maheber*, a meeting of the association based around the church.

The end of a fasting period, even if not a religious day, is marked with special feasts. In addition, some areas may celebrate other, locally significant, occasions, such as '*tirr'* in January, which is celebrated by both Christians and Muslims, or '*lideta'* on which people 'do *silet* for neighbours'. '*Silet*', as mentioned in the previous chapter regarding spirits, means promise. In this case, the promise is to the neighbours, to cook this meal, and by doing so, maintain social relations. If people are able to afford it, they may also celebrate occasions such as birthdays, christenings, and the arrival of special guests, with a meal consisting of meat. Occasions to consume meat are so important, that one man joked with us '*when your relatives call you to their house, it is better not to take your wife, or you have to take the children too… [the problem with children is] you have to share the meat with more people!*'

The two types of occasions in which the giving or sharing of food is significant; for '*aras'*, when a women has had a baby, and for weddings. As described in [**House**], the '*aras*' tradition is for mothers who have newly given birth. For this period, she rests in the home, and is visited by family, friends and neighbours. In a special coffee ceremony, people drink *araqi*, *tella* and tea, eat '*genfo*', a kind of porridge, and put

butter on the head of the mother. Her immediate family might celebrate with a sheep or chicken, and people visit with gifts of food, although it is becoming more common to bring money instead. It is traditional to take a dish of *doro wot* (chicken stew), for '*zemed'* (close family) or friends – for example to your sister. One person described the people you take doro wot for as '*those who visit you by doro wot*'. This directly reciprocal relationship echoes the idea that those you share food with are family, or by sharing food with someone they may become family.

Many in the rural areas told us that taking *doro wot* was more of an urban phenomenon, and that it was more likely that people would take gifts of *injera* and shuro, and if they had it, eggs, milk or butter. The dishes consumed by women after pregnancy (meat, porridge, butter and red pepper), are thought to heal and warm the body, and bind and congeal bodily substances, as well as making the woman 'more beautiful' (Hannig, 2014). In the Sudan, Boddy also found that eggs, goats milk and cheese, fish, rice, sugar, and white flour were associated with fertility and pregnancy, as these foods associated with 'whiteness' are thought to bring blood. Like the foods chosen in Amhara, these foods are in either scarce, limited or expensive (1989, p. 63).

Hassen (2016) describes the difficulty of receiving a gift of '*doro wot*' during this period of *aras,* as the knowledge that they will have to return the gift, or better, in the future when it might be difficult to do so. However, many people I spoke to were aware of the difficulty of this reciprocal arrangement, choosing to take gifts at a level appropriate to their surroundings. As one woman told us in Anestenya Wenz, "*myself, I take only eggs… even if I want to take doro, it would not be good, you have to act*

like the majority". This sensitivity to the economic circumstances of others leads to cultural expectations to share uncooked food or livestock, both in response to begging, and as an obligation of richer members of society (Beshah, 2003; Matsumura, 2006).

In the [**Into the field**] chapter I briefly discussed how a friend was expected to share her good fortune in finding employment by paying for food and drinks when she met with friends. There is a strong sense of envy over inequality, particularly in relation to relatives or close friends, and Matsumura (2006) suggests that feelings of indebtedness or inferiority created by food sharing and gift-giving can have negative impacts among close relationships, leading even to accusations of witchcraft. Thus a person must be careful to be both generous enough, but not flashy, in giving gifts and sharing foods. Among street children in Addis Ababa, Luisa (2000) found that these obligations to share food, even if there was not enough to go around, were upheld for begged food. As one of children told her "If I sit down to eat begged food and one of my friends comes, I have to ask him to join me. It would be (culturally) unseemly if I ate alone while my friends are hungry" (p146). However, food that was bought for one another was treated as a form of a loan, and was expected to be paid back. In this sense, livestock sharing or sharecropping allows a person to help their relatives or friends, in a way in which they do not lost face, as both may benefit from the arrangement.

Weddings are another major event in which food is contributed in a reciprocal manner similar to the taking of foods for *aras.* A number of marriage types have been described in Ethiopia, such as 'religious marriage', 'paid labour marriage' and

'marriage by abduction' (Tilson & Larsen, 2000), but despite the importance of the Orthodox church, most people in rural areas opt instead for civil marriage. Marriages arranged by parents on economically equal basis is known as '*yäsämanya-wəl*' (eighty-bond) (Emirie, 2005), and this is what I focus on here. On the eve of the wedding, the groom and his party, the '*mize*', attend a feast at the home of the bride's parents. After making promises and receiving the blessings of the elders, the bride is carried (by horse, or now also by *bajaj*) to the home of the groom. After the ritual of well-coming, and blessings by the elders, the groom slaughters a chicken and jumps over it, for wishes of well-being for the newly weds. The wedding feast and celebration follow. Emirie describes the contribution of both families and their networks to these celebrations, and the 'great competition between the two marrying families as whose feast will be more elaborate' (2005, p. 126). Parents and close relatives prepare *t'älla*, *araqi*, and teff-flour for preparing a large quantity of *injera*. Close relatives are expected to brew around 100 litres of *t'älla*, which should be returned when these relatives' children are married. Those who live far away may give 3-4 Ethiopian birr, and neighbours give 5-10 *injera*, or 1-2 Ethiopian birr, which must be returned. In addition, male and female neighbours are normally expected to provide labour for the wedding, such as cutting meat, building temporary houses for serving guests, fetching water or cooking wot.

Chickens may be brought as gifts to a wedding, for consumption or for the young couple to keep for production. They may also be taken, as gifts, around a wedding, the groom, bride and company (known as a '*mize*'), can choose any chicken from the village to slaughter, as this wedding song alludes to: "*When the chicken hears her chicks are liked by people and birds, she takes them to the backyard."* The chicken

slaughtered and stepped over by the groom also follows general preferences for red, and young chickens. Usually only the bride, groom and their company who consume the chicken, while the guests will be provided for by the bride's family who will slaughter a cow or sheep for the feast. In addition to slaughtering the red chicken, one woman described how milk is sprinkled over the bride, groom and *mize* company, as a form of goodwill. This emphasises the importance of animal products in celebration and promoting good health and possibly fertility.

Doro wot

For religious feasts, it is proper to consume chicken, in the form of doro wot, a spicy stew consisting of chicken meat and eggs. Larger animals, such as sheep, goats, or cattle, may also be consumed instead of, or as well as the chicken. A group of households, or a large family, may put money together to purchase a cow for Easter, consume some of the meat on the day, and hang the rest to dry, to be eaten as *qwanta wot* over the next few weeks. Families we spoke to who were more socially isolated would lack the ability to participate in this sharing of meat, and would only be able to eat a chicken, or perhaps only eggs to break the fast. Specifically, fasts are broken with *doro wot*, possibly because after the return from prayers at church which run through the night, chickens can be most quickly slaughtered and prepared for a meal. Although the focus of the study has been on Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, Muslims in the area also celebrate occasions, such as Eid, with *doro wot*. These instructions, compiled from all the directions given to me, show some different aspects of the preparation of *doro wot*:

Instructions for doro wot

A man must kill the chicken. Afterwards, put it in boiling water to remove the feathers. Cut the chicken into 12 pieces. Wash the meat with lemon and ajax [soap]. Cook half a kilo of onions in oil in a large pot, add salt, berbere and the chicken pieces. Add water and simmer. Boil enough eggs for the family and place them in the pot. Cook until the meat is tender. Allow to cool and serve on injera.

Figure 16. Easter meal of doro wot, served with lamb tibs (lamb fried with onions) and served with injera.

Only men may slaughter animals. I was told that in theory, an unmarried girl could also slaughter, but in practice, there are enough men around that they don't. If a woman has no husband, or he is away, they may ask their sons, or other male relatives, or neighbours. One young woman, spoke to us while her husband was selling *chat* in Bahir Dar market: *"In the old times… you don't give the wot before the arrival of the husband, even if the children are hungry and need food. Nowadays we don't care for this kind of tradition. Actually this culture still happens somewhere... it is traditionally prohibited to cook doro wot when you husband is not available.*" She

tells us about her own experiences when her husband was working in Addis Ababa, and her brother was visiting – "*…people rumoured that I killed chickens without the presence of my husband, saying "she will do something" [have an affair with other men]. It shows that you undermine your husband. My husband heard about it, but he didn't care, he appreciated me because we [her brother] killed the chicken for the children.*"

People were very clear that it was important for the meat to be cut into 12 parts – as one woman told us: '*If [she cuts it into] 11 pieces they say she is not a good woman*'. An older woman, overhearing our conversation at coffee one morning, told us this practice is called '*kodisha*', when you cut the 12 parts of the chicken. When I asked why 12 pieces, people would laugh at tell me: 'there are only 12 pieces in the chicken!', or '*there is a saying, "if you want to eat chicken, either you eat for 2 or 12 people"'*. People speculated about how this number was associated with Christianity, such as the 12 apostles, or were related to the 12 months of the year. When I asked about the 13-month Ethiopian calendar, he replied '*oh this little pagume* [the 5-day 13th month of the year]. He also suggested that people believed that Empress Taitu, wife of Emperor Menelik, was the first to do this practice, although I'm not sure where this idea came from. What constituted those 12 parts varies, although the majority follow the cuts shown in the diagram below:

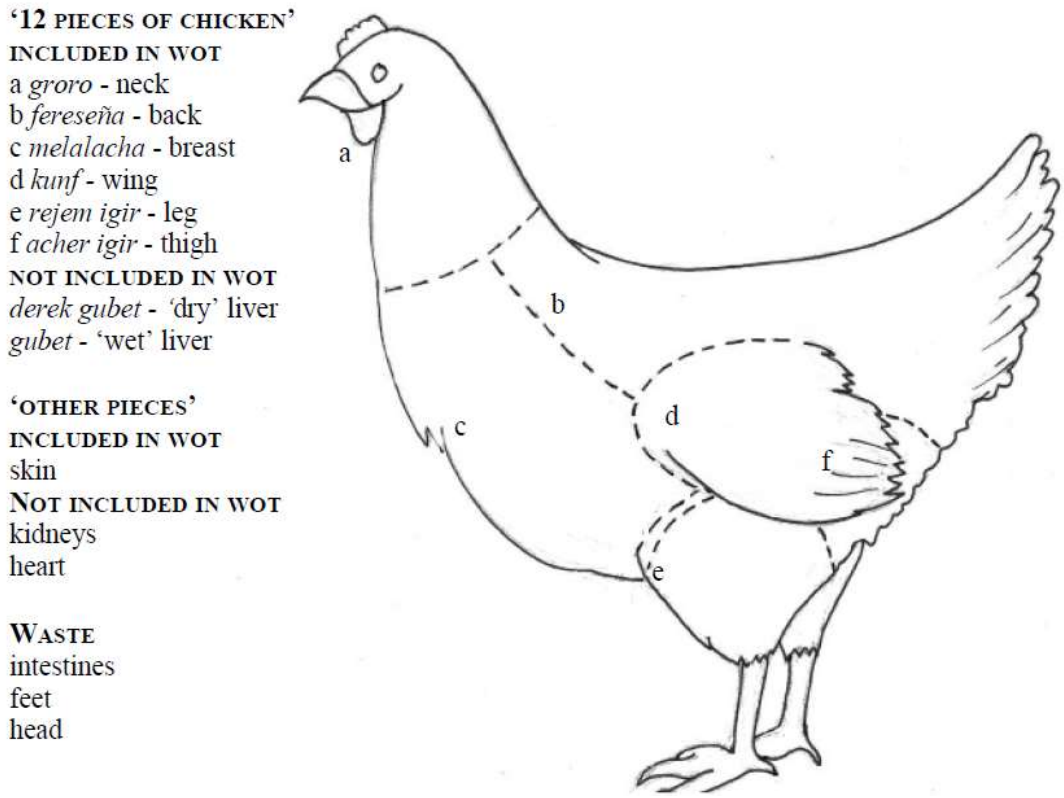


Figure 17. Cuts of chicken

The 'wet' and 'dry' liver are not put into the *wot*, whilst the skin is. Usually the heart and liver pieces are placed on a stick directly into the fire, and eaten by the men before the doro wot is cooked. How the remainder of pieces are shared amongst the people eating is significant. Traditionally, the best pieces go to guests or the head of the household, 'to show respect'. If a woman had no husband, and no sons, she would invite the person who had killed the chicken to have this piece. The 'best pieces' are usually considered to be the *melalacha* and *fereseña*, occasionally the *acher igir*, described as the parts with the most meat. There was some variation in this – while the majority think *fereseña* is the best part, one or two people told me that it was not as there was little meat on it. The remaining pieces are distributed according to age and status of the household members – in some, the woman of the household was allocated the second best, in others, the oldest son would receive the other meat-

rich parts, such as the thigh and legs, and the woman would eat last – perhaps the neck or the skin.

There was no particular regional difference in how this meat was distributed – it was a matter of household preference whether the children received the best piece after the husband. One woman described her small share of the food in terms of her responsibility as the mother of the household "*the woman always wants to eat what remains after they give for children and husband… they always like others to eat before they eat, it is their maternal responsibility*". As I discussed in the **[House]** chapter, women occupy a low social position in Ethiopia, and taking the remnants of the meat in a meal is one way in which it might be expressed.

However, others bemoaned that modern children did not follow the rules of respect with food – that the best parts were distributed according to age. As one woman complained about her own children: "*This generation of children does not accept this rule, they prefer the big [pieces]… for example, my daughter does not like the neck, but she deserves this."* Food would also be shared with non-related household members, such as the maid or the boy that herds the cattle – depending on the age of the children in the household, they may be given this after the adults in the household – "*for my husband, melalacha, for me acher igir, for others [points to maid] rejem igir, kunf, and for the cow boy rejem igir. The rejem igir go to the living in people [motions to her children]. They are little children, we give some pieces of meat from our plate"*. The sharing of the meat amongst those present then, emphasises their relations with respect to each other, and could be summarised as:

Guests > husband > wife > older male children > older female children / live in workers > young children

Not all households followed this tradition, some because their husband did not eat doro wot, and so the necessity of giving him the best piece of meat was removed. Others thought it was a strange idea, laughing at our question – 'we eat what we like!' As well as the sharing of the meat showing respect for related and non-related people at the meal, it was also a way of demonstrating good relations between husband and wife - "*if the man is good, he will send the meat to me, if he is not good, he will eat it all himself… cut it in half, half to husband, and half to wife.*" These sentiments were expressed in a song that we were told about: "*oh fereseña, oh fereseña... only for abora [head of family], only for lovers*"[29].

It is not just the household members that consume the chicken. Preparing *doro wot* for guests is a sign of respect, and this may be the only point outside of the religious holidays on which households may consume chickens. Getahun and Kassu (2014) quote the Amharic saying 'even if he or she has nothing, a person would kill at least a chicken for his favourite kin'. For a woman to be able to cook this dish well is a sign of a good woman, perhaps by suggesting she has acquired the necessary skills for marriage and caring for members of her household. For this reason, even urban friends would tell me about how their wives cooking *doro wot* for their parents for the first time as being a significant event in their relationship. Perhaps for these

[29] I could not find any recordings of this song, but similar lyrics can be found in this song about Awdamet, a religious holiday [http://ethiopedia.blogspot.co.uk/2007/04/manalmosh-dibo-audamet.html] – "Oh the fersegna, the Horseman, that chicken breast/Aptly reserved for the House head and the Elders/ Eaten lavishly and the relish shared amongst all/ Until the bones remain standing like a horse/ Alas the *Fereseña* has been consumed" [their translation]

couples, where both men and woman are educated, preparing *doro wot* was more, not less, important, as a means to demonstrate that despite being 'modern' they could still perform the tasks necessary for their ethnic identity. Cusack describes how women are often seen to be the guardians of tradition, and the 'Modern African Woman' who is unable to 'cook properly' is thus seen as responsible for the loss of traditional culture (2000).

Before I left for the field, I tried, with only a little success, to make *doro wot*. In Ethiopia, I was struck by the simplicity of the instructions from the women I spoke to in the field, and the complexity of the recipes trying to achieve that 'authentic' feel.[30] Some called for the use of 'spiced butter' or finding spice mixes which most in Ethiopia would not use on a regular basis, others for use of stock or wine instead of several hours cooking. Others marinated the chicken in lemon, which simulates the flavour gained from washing the meat in lemons prior to eating. Many advocated grinding your own berbere – although most people I know in Ethiopia bought it directly at the market – there was already enough to do in the house. The incorporation of tomatoes, onions and garlic into the Tigrayan stews was reported by older women to have become popular after the last Italian occupation (1936-41), and did not represent a new 'type' of dish (Lyons, 2007, p. 355). Goody describes this as a feature of uncomplicated 'peasant cooking'- '[it] relies less on precise quantities... it tends to be less tied to specific ingredients; one can substitute more easily if one

[30] http://www.daringgourmet.com/2013/08/27/doro-wat-spicy-ethiopian-chicken-stew/
http://www.congocookbook.com/chicken_recipes/doro_wat.html
http://www.africanbites.com/doro-wat-ethiopian-chicken-stew/
http://www.food.com/recipe/ethiopian-chicken-doro-wat-stew-433739
https://jabberwockystew.net/2013/04/22/karls-doro-wot-ethiopian-red-chicken-stew-with-authentic-injera/

[is] simply cooking a dish of type for supper' (2008, p. 87). However, it is also an indicator of how preferences can evolve in response to outside change. For example, Geissler and Prince describe how maize is viewed as both 'progress' and 'disaster' due to its association with food scarcity, overseas food aid, and changing ways in which food can be shared (2010, p. 161). In Ethiopia, Getahun and Kassu (2014) describe how a preference for raw goat, rather than raw beef, emerged in the 1990s in response to health concerns around cholesterol.

Choosing a chicken

A few people told us that doro wot made them, or their husbands ill, and they had been told not to eat it. However, they prepared it for the religious holidays, in particular, Fasika (Easter), Yohanes (New Year) and Meskel (the finding of the true cross). The imperative to cook doro wot on these special occasions is so strong, that even those who do not enjoy eating doro wot, feel compelled to cook it. I heard a few times; "*They believe if they don't cook doro wot in the holidays something bad will happen".* As one woman in Anestenya Wenz told us: "*In my home, my husband doesn't like doro wot. I cook but he doesn't eat. I give all the meat to the children, and he [her husband] eats the eggs. Even my children do not like doro wot because they copy their father. [I cook it] for qolle, if I do not cook in the holidays something bad will happen in my home*". This association with the '*qolle*' spirit beliefs was discussed in the previous chapter, in relation to colour. Here I consider the choice of the chicken used for consumption according to local preferences for flavour and suitability for these occasions.

Consumers primarily choose chickens for consumption in a similar fashion to those choosing them for production, especially regarding checking the health of chickens. Around the holidays, large red double combed cockerels are preferred, and these can command a much increased price. Outside of the holidays, hens were generally preferred due to their fatty meat. Factors such as age and size of chickens also had a significant effect on the price of chickens – the age of cockerels could be determined by the size of the spurs, and hens by their weight and whether they continued to produce eggs. Outside the holidays, smaller chickens might sell for 20-25 birr, and during the holidays this might increase to 34-40 birr, however the best cockerels may increase in price from 70 to 100 birr, even in rural markets, and higher in the urban markets:

> *I'm sitting in the back of a bajaj with Negist – yesterday the fruit supplier didn't have any nice mangoes, so we're on our way to the market to buy some for breakfast for our guests. Tomorrow is Easter, and the busy Saturday market, at the already busy Bahir Dar market, is today in chaos. Men are selling CDs of devotional music out of vans on the roadside, demonstrating their wares with large speakers balanced on roofs. A few men are walking with a sheep's foot clasped in their hand, or dragging along two on a rope. Sellers with bunches of chafi (a scented grass used to cover the floors during coffee ceremonies and celebrations) have doubled their prices, and the women do not bother to quibble prices here, when there is serious negotiating to do with the chicken traders. Migrated from the usual alley, the traders are surrounded by men and women grabbing the chickens, testing their*

> *weight, checking their colour, and trying to fight the escalation of prices, while making sure they have a chicken to eat come Easter morning. 'two hundred and sixty birr for this small chicken?!' 'three hundred birr' 'don't you have more red ones?'. We look at each other and laugh at the escalation, the chickens for our Easter meal were bought at regular cost and have been tied up in our compound for over a week now, eating maize and being shut into the utility room overnight. I read later that prices of chickens for Easter in Addis Ababa have reached 400 birr this year, more than double their usual price.* (from fieldnotes)

The best time to buy chickens for consumption for a holiday was described as '*3 days or 1 week before, to see if the qolle is happy... and the day the holiday comes the price is expensive'.* The risk of chickens dying before the holiday had to be balanced with this increasing price - '*the peak price for holidays is the eve – if [they buy] one week before must take into consideration feed, shelter, risk of death – but if you leave longer you run out of time, and sellers will try to get as high a price as possible'.* Even outside of holidays, it was seen as preferable to buy chickens one week before consumption, in order to have a chance to observe its health, feed it 'clean' food such as grains, and allow the meat to recover from the result of the blood draining from the meat as it is carried upside down from place to place. One woman in Medamma advised us on the best time to buy chickens for a holiday:

> '*If you buy ahead of the holidays it is always good. If you buy and eat it, the meat will not be soft, it will have its blood drained. If you buy ahead*

of a holiday, you can feed it well, and consider it is one of your own. Here we don't have any open toilets, you can be sure it doesn't eat some waste, and it makes you feel safe'

Avoidance of black chickens for consumption varies from only during holidays, to none at all, although the prevalent feeling is sufficient to ensure black chickens are command a lower price all year around. My urban friends told me that urban educated people (who are assumed to not pay any heed to these traditions), take advantage of preference for non-black chickens and other animals, and drive hard bargains for them. A few rural people told me that they did this too, saying 'the meat is the same'. While I did observe a few people buying black chickens in the markets, I did not see anyone slaughtering and preparing black chickens to eat.

Generally, both rural and urban consumers of chickens prefer to eat habesha chickens, due to perceived better taste and suitability for cooking in doro wot. Later in this chapter, and in the subsequent **[Intensive]** chapter, I discuss the growing market for these chickens, due to increased popularity of western style food and restaurants aimed at attracting tourists, particularly around the lake and town in Bahir Dar.

There are strong preferences for the type of chicken eaten for the Christian holidays – male, red and double combed. This was described as the best chicken to eat for Fasika, Meskel and Yohannes, although there could be some flexibility for other holidays and occasions, for example the white or white and red spotted chickens could be eaten if red chickens could not be found. This is unrelated to the taste of the meat – the fattier meat of female chickens is considered to be tastier - '*females are*

good, actually tradition forces us to slaughter awra'. We spoke to Kegne, a man in his 40s in Bahir Dar, who is considered an 'elder' due to his cultural knowledge, and who produces new bibles using traditional materials and methods. While the preference for double-combed chickens has been recognised elsewhere, none of my respondents had any suggestions why this preference existed, or what was wrong with the single combs. Kegne suggested a local saying - *"one who has no brother can eat a single comb"* – and went on to tell us '*others should not eat this, people associate it with a 'mulu qotar' [whole or full number]. They consider it [single combs] not whole, the number should be even.'*

The black chicken is never eaten for holidays. One of my friends in the city suggested that this was because the colour was associated with death or funerals (although people wear white at funerals in Ethiopia). In the previous chapter, Kegne suggested that it had a Christian religious basis - '*black belongs to the devil – the reason behind people not liking black chicken, has religious background.. Kayin and Abel both made sacrifices, and God accepts sacrifice of Abel 'the good son', and not Cain – and the black crow accepts the sacrifice of Kayin.'*

Many associated black with bad luck or ill-health - '*black is the sign of a bad thing, if I eat black chickens I will be sick*', which might be extended to all black animals. As one woman told me in Korabta, '*those who have some kind of wuqabi who is against that black cow, they do not eat many times. Some of my cousins slaughtered a black ox for a wedding, and many relatives ate shuro, they did not want to eat that black ox'*. Some people were more flexible, eating it at times of necessity '*in Sane and Hamle* [approximately June and July] *all those which people don't want, like black and*

single comb, we eat at that time. At that time, the farmers have no food'. People linked the avoidance of black chickens specifically to the presence and absence of the *qolle - '[I don't eat] black. It's not a problem if its not a holiday… the qolle does not accept black... [the qolle] is not visible, but when you do something for holidays, they come taste everything, and sometimes if doing coffee ceremony, if a person sits in front of door, he [the qolle] kicks that person and they become sick.'*

The difficulty in separating the identity and role of *qolle*, *wuqabi* and *zar*, is underlined by how people attributed avoidance of black and single combed chickens to all three of the types of spirits:

> '*In our culture, there is qolle, and the qolle doesn't accept black chickens and netela in the holidays. Because of this people don't want … black chickens*'

> '*In holidays don't slaughter netela [single comb]. It will not make us happy, this is what we inherited from our forefathers. Our forefathers said red colour is good for wuqabi. Actually wuqabi is like an internal interest, if it does not make you happy, it is not good to eat*'

There is an awareness that the higher prices the red, double combed cockerels command around the holidays mean that not everyone can afford to buy them – '*it is only the poor which slaughter the single comb in the holidays'.* However, there are ways in which it can be made acceptable '*a single comb*, *we cook it with egg to make wuqabi amlak consider it as a double comb'.* A few families in Korabta spoke of their practice of slaughtering two chickens, one male and one female, one of which had to be white, and the other red. They considered it to be part of their culture, and told

me '*it is not culture to slaughter one chicken on holiday... at one time we had a big family, but now even if not a big family, slaughter two chickens'.*

Others had become less concerned with these practices - that '*all chickens are one type, all the habesha are one... we slaughter the chickens we keep and we consider all are good… even for black chickens, we don't care'*. A male traditional healer in Merawi cited religious reasons for this - '*for Yohanes and Fasika in our culture, we choose the best type like red, dereb and male – but now it doesn't matter like it did before, especially dereb it doesn't matter, but people choose colour stil. In our religion it is not acceptable, [they are] animals, its permitted by God to eat, so we can't prefer one to another. Nowadays people understand this, so they stop.'*

This was supported both by Kegne, and Deres, a priest in the Medamma area, who were both keen to disassociate the Ethiopian Orthodox Church with these practices. '*Slaughtering chickens has no religious ground, we are following what our fathers are doing. Actually a number of people say that 'it is a single comb and it is not good for our family', 'oh this is a double comb, it is nice', but me I am a religious guy, I don't care for this kind of thing. Even Yohanes I slaughter chickens, there is no religious ground, but what differs me from other people is I don't care for colour, comb, or any of these things, I consider these things as a superstition.'* Kegne told us: '*the church doesn't appreciate that belief, anyone can slaughter black chickens. This is people's perception, rather than religious.'* Deres attributed the change to the increased prominence of church teachings, rather than coming from government or other sources - *the government doesn't care about these things, only advise people to become more economical, doesn't worry about traditions, because government itself*

is a mixed one (both in ethnicity and faith). P*eople are nowadays listening to the church education.'*

These preferences all relate to *habesha* chickens, *ferenji* chickens are considered inappropriate due to being single combed and the wrong colour. *Ferenji* chickens were usually excluded from these discussions about meat preferences. It is unusual for people in the rural areas to have tasted it, as they are not always available in the local market. However, the perception that the meat and eggs are inferior in flavour to indigenous chickens is common - '*I never eat the exotic chickens, I use them only for eggs. I heard from someone that it is not tasty, everyone says this but I think no-one proves it'*. In the town of Merawi, more people we spoke to had tried it once before, although none of them were likely to cook them again –

> '*I don't like the taste, I tried it when I lived abroad*'
>
> *'It is not as tasty as habesha, and also the eggs are not as tasty*'
>
> *'I don't like them, I only like habesha. In this woreda, people do not eat ferenji chickens. I have tasted before, and don't like the taste of the meat, the meat is big. The ferenji [eggs] is ok for tibs, for kikil (boiled) it is not good, it is difficult to peel*'

However, there could be potential new markets for exotic chickens among some rural inhabitants. Some people avoid chickens and eggs due to an association with disease, due to their eating habits '*people dislike chickens because they roam free and eat human waste'* and due to a rumour about a link between eggs and HIV. One version of this story I heard was this:

> '*Through my life, I have never bought eggs… you know, my mother told me when I was a child, a priest has caught HIV/AIDs, and he was surprised because he has only one wife, and finally he realised he has eaten eggs, when they went to the market to meet the seller, the chicken was HIV positive... so when I heard that, I stopped eating eggs. So now I only eat eggs from my chickens in my house.'*

The keeping of exotic chickens in enclosed 'clean' spaces was interesting to those we spoke to about it, and they likened consuming ferenji chickens to the popular uptake of improved cattle breeds - *'we drink the exotic milk, why not eat the exotic chickens?'*

Other ways to cook chicken

Since chicken is cooked only on religious occasions by many households, and the only way for it to be eaten on these occasions is as wot, many women claimed that 'there is no other way to cook chicken'. However, pieces are often cut from the chicken and fried (known as *tibs*), or put on a skewer into the fire. In addition, *alicha wot*, omits the berbere that gives *kay* (red) *wot* its colour and kick. Women who had lived in other areas, whether abroad, or in different parts of Ethiopia, had learned of alternative ways of cooking. Additionally, people were presented with these things through television shows or advertisements – as one woman described processed and roast chicken: '*I saw it on television… the machine cleans it [the chicken] inside and they roast it whole.'*

Restaurants serving chicken prepared in Western forms, such as grilled, roast, or cutlets were popular in Bahir Dar, and formed a significant part of the market for the ferenji chickens. Just as the flesh of *ferenji* chickens was thought to be too soft for

the long cooking of wot, and would melt away, *habesha* chickens were too tough to be suitable for these cooking methods. To eat *ferenji* chickens, then, can be seen as a mark of an urban, aspirational lifestyle, in which people can afford to eat in restaurants. Boddy (1989) tells us that a mark of hospitality in Sudan was the serving of scarce foods, in particular foods associated with 'whiteness'. The 'whiteness' is both associated with countries of power, but with the foods being 'clean' as they were enclosed, and protected from dirt and dryness. However, Wilk (1999) describes how imported dishes in Belize began to lose their position as aspirational foods. In Ethiopia, too, it is not the Western lifestyle that is truly aspirational, more so it is the achievement of the new modern 'Ethiopian identity'.

More Ethiopians have become able to travel, and the internet allows regular contact with the diaspora (Hafkin, 2006), enough of whom have opened Ethiopian restaurants for them to have made a mark on both the culinary landscape[31] and popular culture outside of Ethiopia[32]. As the local market remains closed to foreign chains, traditional and 'western' food styles have become blended, to meet the desires of growing urban middle classes. For example Kaldi's Coffee, a popular chain in Addis Ababa, fills the gap in the market for a Starbucks-style modern café,

[31] For example, see the cookbooks 'Mesob Across America' by Harry Kloman (2010), and 'Marcus Off Duty' by Ethiopian-Swedish chef Marcus Samuelsson, who cooked the first state dinner for President Obama.

[32] The disconnect between the growing popularity of Ethiopian restaurants opened by the diaspora, and the portrayal of Ethiopian famine in the Western media, was put to an uncomfortable comedic use in the popular American romantic comedy, When Harry Met Sally (1989), "*….we're sitting and we're talking at this Ethiopian restaurant she wanted to go to. And I was making jokes, you know like. "Hey I didn't know that they had food in Ethiopia? This will be a quick meal. I'll order two empty plates and we can leave."*

complete with the green and white logo[33]. Their cafes - large open spaces with glass fronts, outdoor seating, and fridges of cakes – are decorated with the following story:

> "*It is said, that man's love affair of coffee began in Ethiopia's Kaffa region, where the plant originates. In 6th Century Ethiopia, a goat herder named Kaldi stumbled upon his wandering flock as they sampled berries from nearby bushes. Ordinarily sluggish, his goats had an unusual amount of energy. After tasting several seeds himself, Kaldi discovered that the berries were the cause for the increased energy. It wasn't long before coffee beans and their stimulating effect traveled the world*."

This allows them to draw links between the history of Ethiopian coffee, the traditional coffee ceremony, and modern coffee drinkers, too busy to sit through the full ceremony. One of the interesting comparisons that respondents drew was between themselves and urban populations. These compared preferences for which colour chickens people would eat, and there was a general belief that urban people did not follow the countryside culture, and would ignored rules against eating black chickens. While discussing the preference for red and double-combed cockerels for religious occasions, one man remarked '*no-one likes black… because it doesn't make you happy, but the town people don't care'.* In Anestenya Wenz, they considered the reasons for urban people not following these traditions - '*it is culture, but some people who live in urban areas do not care about dereb or netela (double or single*

[33] You can see the logo on their website - http://kaldiscoffeeethiopia.com/

combs), male or female. Urban people know everything, and they use technology, it is changing everything, they do not follow the countryside culture'.

However, to the contrary, I found that urban people in both Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar were very concerned with particular expressions of Ethiopian culture. Cultural restaurants were very popular, in which 'traditional' dances from different areas of the country were performed by young dancers. Guests are seated around mesobs, woven round tables, on locally made stools of goatskin, and cultural food is served alongside Ethiopian beer and *tej,* the famous Ethiopian honey wine. While the 'traditional cultural food' presented at these restaurants, are not inauthentic, these restaurants being more full of urban habeshas then foreign tourists, the difference between this consumption and that of the countryside, is that they can afford to eat them on a regular basis, rather than a few times a year for religious occasions. Both in these urban resturants, and with Ethiopian diaspora abroad, I was struck by the search for 'the authentic' types of food. While in small towns, the light *injera* is preferred as it is made with teff, rather than the millet that rural households must use to save money, and which results in a darker, and dryer, *injera*, in the urban areas, people prefer darker *injera*, as it is has been made with a darker grained teff, and is believed to have a better taste.

In these surroundings, the traditional drinks of *tälla* and *araqi* (local beer and liqor) were not seen as being appropriate, and were instead replaced with 'modern' alternatives. These local bottled beers, with names like 'Giyorgis' (St George, the patron saint of Ethiopia), 'Dashen' (meaning guard, but also the name of the tallest mountain in the country, Ras Dashen) and 'Walia' (a type of ibex found in the

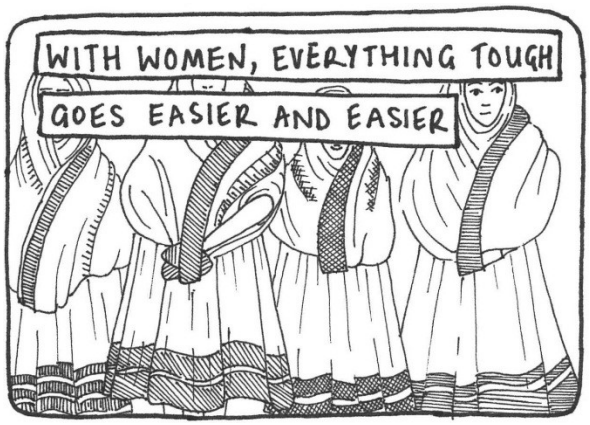
northern highlands of Ethiopia, and also the name given to the Ethiopian national football team), are part-owned by European breweries, and with their patriotic names, conjure up a feeling of strong national identity. In addition, *tej*, is something that would not be something regularly consumed by Ethiopians, and which historically has been linked to courtly cuisine (Goody, 1982, p. 99). This form of consumption allows people to engage with an idealised pan-Ethiopian identity, one which is heavily contested by others in the country (Finneran, 2013; Van Der Beken, 2009).

Wilk (1999) describes how a national identity of Belizean cuisine has been created in response to 'the other', both British and Mexican influences in its history, as well as the flow of migrants, tourists and media that links the Caribbean with the United States. This has been a local process, in which Belizean nationalists 'know that they are supposed to have something authentic and local to offer…serving an authentic Belizean meal…is a performance of modernity and sophistication' (p247). This contrasts with the idea of 'national cuisine' in Asia being a colonializing force, by which local dishes are coded and stored in recipe books, to save it from destruction by imperialism (Appadurai, 2008; Heldke, 2008). Cusack argues that emerging African cuisines 'clearly reflect the colonial encounter and the subsequent dependent relationship with the West, as well as indigenous ethnic culinary practices' (2000, p. 207).

When we consider the perception of the Amhara as a colonising force in Ethiopia (Cohen, 2000), the adoption of *doro wot* as a national dish becomes problematic. Historically, doro wot was strongly associated with the Amhara. As Reminick notes

"for the Amhara the ultimate in cuisine is the doro wät or chicken stew… although the meal is common among most other groups that live on the high plateau it is admitted by non-Amhara that the best chicken wät can only come from a woman of the Amhara tribe" (1973, p. 18). Now, people will often emphasize that *doro wot* is the 'national dish' of Ethiopia. Even when I was travelling in the south of Ethiopia, a region that traditionally shows resistance to the 'Amharic' culture of the north, I was told that *doro wot* is an important way of celebrating special occasions. Thus the depiction of *doro wot* as a symbol of national identity reiterates the idea that 'Ethiopian identity' is in fact 'Amhara identity'.

Conversations about food during fieldwork then, became about more than than the role of women in preparing food. In rural areas, patterns of consumption were conserved (such as serving *doro wot* on the holidays even if they did not enjoy eating it), but there was a growing awareness of how these were changing in nearby urban areas and among the younger generation. Chickens have become part of a large and complex network, as *doro wot* gains symbolic value as a national dish, and as part of ongoing discussions about modern Ethiopian identity.



Intensive

In the [**Extensive**] chapter, I described the systems of care for chickens at small-scale, household levels of chicken keeping. Although generally called 'village chickens', this system of back-yard poultry can also be found in peri-urban and urban households (Guèye, 2002), and several of my neighbours in Bahir Dar kept chickens, which could be seen running around our street. I also introduced the '*ferenji*' (foreign) chicken – commercial breeds imported from Europe or South Africa, which have been introduced to boost the productivity of backyard chickens. Generally referred to in the agricultural literature as being 'exotic' (as they are in this context), they, and hybrid birds, make up only 1.35% and 2.79% of the national poultry flock respectively (CSA, 2015). The majority of these are kept in intensive, large-scale commercial poultry production systems, which Alemu et al. (2008) characterise as having greater or equal to 10,000 birds. These are mostly located in Debre Zeit, a town close to Addis Ababa, where there is also a large livestock research centre. Examples of these large-scale poultry farms include ELFORA, Alema and Genesis farms – ELFORA's website

reports that it can produce 1 million kilos of broilers, and 50 million eggs per year (ELFORA, 2012).

For the purpose of this study however, I was interested in the small-scale commercial farms, which Alemu et al. (2008) describe as consisting of 20-1000 exotic breeds, with medium level of inputs such as feed, water and veterinary services. In their paper they describe these as being located mostly around Debre Zeit town and Addis Ababa, however, I found that the peri-urban areas of Bahir Dar were a site of development of these businesses, possibly encouraged by the poultry multiplication and distribution centre based at Andessa, close to Bahir Dar, and the site of the regional livestock research offices. The poultry multiplication and distribution centres were established in the 1990s, and Amhara has the highest distribution of fertile eggs, through the centres in Kombolcha and Andessa (Pagani & Wossene, 2008). These businesses represent one of the most significant changes in poultry keeping in Ethiopia. Here chickens play a more focussed economic role, particularly as the chickens kept this way, the '*ferenji*' commercial breeds, are generally considered unsuitable for cultural purposes. In this chapter, I explore how this system of production leads to a different relationship of care with the chicken, but also a shift from its role as 'women's work' to a form of business.

I was able to speak to the owners of 10 semi-intensive poultry businesses during this fieldwork period, 2 owned by women, and the rest owned by men or mixed groups. One was based in the main research site of Anestenya Wenz, another in Korebta, and the others were distributed in the outskirts of Bahir Dar. Some we met at coffee shops or their homes in the city, and others were able to arrange to meet us at their

production sites, to show us their facilities. There were two sites which had been chosen by the government for use for peri-urban agriculture, one on the road west of the city towards the airport, and another over the Abay bridge (Blue Nile). This second site was based in an area of rapid infrastructure construction, which had been undertaken to support the regional government offices nearby. These sites were distinguishable from rural livestock production by the regular rows of barns and fences, and the electrical cables running overhead.

The photos below show some of the set-ups of the barns used to produce chickens. They are constructed in the same materials as the rural areas - eucalyptus, mud and straw, with corrugated iron roofs. Ventilation is provided by open windows across the length of the barn, covered in wire mesh, and shade or rain protection is achieved by unfolding plastic sheeting that act as blinds. The floor is either dirt or concrete, and covered in straw. The use of feeders and water dispensers is common. Perches are provided at different heights. For those who hatch eggs or have day-old chicks, rows of lightbulbs hanging from the ceiling are used to maintain a sufficiently warm temperature (I was quoted figures between 32˚ and 35˚C), or fans used to cool it down. The chickens are vaccinated, and most businesses form a good relationship with veterinarians who provide additional care when needed. Some efforts are made towards control of disease, such as keeping the room protected from the weather, keeping visits into the production space to a minimum, and use of liquid disinfectant on shoes. Across the sites there are a range of poultry business strategies, including egg production, raising of birds for live sale, slaughter and preparation of broilers for sale to restaurants, feed production and selling the waste by-product as fertiliser. Maximum flock sizes varied from around 50 to 1500, although people spoke of losing

hundreds of birds to disease in one production cycle, and the pictures below show the production sites at the end of a production cycle (when most of the birds had been sold), and in between cycles, when it was being prepared for incoming chicks.

Figure 18. Inside a small-scale intensive poultry farm

Case Study – Meron

I focus first on the experiences of Meron, who can be considered one of the success stories of semi-intensive chicken husbandry in the area. She lives close to Hiwot's family home in one of the districts of Bahir Dar, and we met her in her compound – a collection of buildings in various states of repair, made of concrete and corrugated iron. She greeted us with a friendly smile and apologised for the mess, as they were having building work done, funded by her successes in the poultry industry. We followed her into the living room of the main house – it was fairly typical for an urban household, with bright painted walls, lino flooring, sofas arranged around a coffee table, a wooden television cabinet, and a display cabinet in the corner of the room with family photos in frames. Over cups of rich coffee and soft rolls of bread, we discussed her experiences in the poultry industry.

Like many other women, she started keeping chickens on a small scale at home ten years ago. A few years ago, one of her neighbours, who works at the University, saw the 'good work' she was doing, and helped her prepare a proposal for the regional government who were offering assistance for women who were interested in starting poultry business. In a study in the North Wollo Zone, in the Amhara Region, Woldegies (2014) also found that women who had started poultry keeping independently were also recognised and provided appropriate training. She was one of 10 women who were chosen at that time to receive this assistance, which was in the form of 120 45 day-old *ferenji* chickens, and the necessary feed for them. The women also received training on care, feeding and a book of instructions and information to support their learning. This initial stage of scaling up from backyard poultry was conducted in their own homes, but after showing promise in the work, she was granted a larger plot of land for production by the regional government, and was able to expand her business further.

She described the changes she has made in caring for chickens as a result of the training: '*I was trying to keep the traditional way, but after I got the training, it was different, and now I get the benefits… even before I didn't know how many grams [of food] to give in a day… and before I lost chickens to* aner *[a serval, a medium-sized wild cat] because I didn't know how to build shelters, now this is stopped... In the traditional way... I didn't separate [the sick chickens] from the other healthy chickens... and I bought chickens from the market and tried to produce them, but [they are] not good, and now I buy from the research place.*'

At the time we spoke to her, her business model was to buy 1-day old chicks from producers, and sell them at 45 days, 5 months or 6 months, although she told us that it is best to sell at 45 days as they get a better profit – the cost of feeding chickens for those additional months does not reflect in a much higher price. She usually sold chickens to traders, who sell them to other traders in the countryside, although recently she sold to extension agents, and to the NGO World Vision, who have a programme distributing them to poor women in rural areas. She calculated the cost of chicks as 10 birr for 1 day chicks, including transport, and sold them usually for 45 birr for 45 day old birds. She estimated the profit of the latest cycle as 100,000 birr (about $5000) – compared to the national GNI (PPP), which for 2014 was calculated as $1500 (World Bank, 2016).

The chicks are sourced from the research centre in Andessa, and one time she bought them in Awassa (or *Hawassa,* a city to the south of Addis Ababa that has a large agricultural college). Usually a few producers put money together to rent a car and go to the sites to buy their stock. When we visited, she was keeping koekoeks, although she has tried the red and white exotic types before. She was able to complain to the research centres about the quality of the chickens – the previous autumn she had bought 1000 koekoeks, 400 of which died at 45 days. However the research centre assured her that the next batch were a different quality – and she agreed that this time they are better - '*they only die of attacking each other, not of disease'.*

She told us about how she has grown her business. When she kept chickens at home she had only 50, and the first group that she received numbered 120. When she

moved to the dedicated site, she started with 500, and expanded sufficiently to be able to sell 2000 for the previous holidays. Before she was given the place for production, she had been keeping cows, but stopped this, and expanded the chicken business. She used her profit to rent land from farmers on which she grew eucalyptus, vegetables, mango, chat, and bees for honey. This part of the business she has now passed on to the son who helped her build up her businesses – '*I built this new house, and sent my children to school, but he lost so many things by helping me, compared to the other children, so now I give this property to him*'. However this profit was not without cost – '*to get this benefit, I lost many things. I walk one and half hours on foot to take care of chickens. I had a place to produce more chickens, but I didn't get money, it is difficult to access the market by myself.'* She considered herself lucky in her ability to access the market at the moment – there are many producers, but they start and stop, and find it difficult to build a market for themselves. However, she has been frequently praised by and at the agriculture office, so they send potential buyers, like the NGO, her way.

She hoped to expand the business – the office for small scale enterprise promised to lend her 300,000 birr, which she planned to invest in buying a *bajaj* (autorickshaw) and a driving license for her son, renewing the chicken housing, and to begin mixing her own feed. Both the expansion of the poultry business and the *bajaj* taxi service will enable them to pay back the loan. She made a point of telling us that she will not use the money for household consumption, or clothes, only for the business, and that both her and her son plan to work hard to pay it back.

She noted the necessity of taking good care of employees – '*Now I have two people in the production place full-time – I built a place for them to live there, pay for their water and electric... I give better money to my employees, in holidays I give eggs and chicken and a bonus when we sell many to NGOs and others, so they are eager to work',* and to her wider network ' *I even give chickens in the holiday for people who have supported my idea.'* While Meron spoke about supporting women who were interested in starting up, she told us about her own experience at the start of her career in poultry. Another woman in the neighbourhood is also a semi-intensive producer, she has contacts in the government, and receives publicity as a 'model' of the system, much like the model farms in the one-five programme. However when Meron went to speak to her, she was not willing to share advice – she described her as 'a difficult woman'.

She told us about the increasing professionalization of the sector – before it was just women who could read, now 'good degree holders and doctors' take part. One example that she gave us, was of an emerging group, an association of 20 people 'doctors, engineers', who are producing in a modern way like 'Tysons' (the American company 'Tyson Foods', industry leaders in processed poultry). We were unable to speak to this group directly, but she told us: 'T*he one who gave this idea, came from America… they have a plan to give their production place they have now to others, who don't have work, and will produce In a modern way, employing a lot of people, and the government has accepted this plan... they have a plan to export chickens, then prepare for consumers... and those 20 people get training in the S--d Hotel* (a hotel in the city popular for lunch meetings and visitors on business)'. I also heard from others that this group wanted to include processing of birds for local sale and

export, although not how they intended to overcome the obstacles of irregular power supply and poor road infrastructure.

There was a notable absence of other women in the expansion of this sector, and we asked her why she thought that might be the case. One of the criticisms she had is that people were unwilling to do the work necessary to see the profit - '*A lot of women come in this business, but they give up when they lose most chickens. I try to help them many times… and in order to get a better profit and better money, have to spend money and little work..'.* In particular, people became involved because they saw others become successful, but they lacked the knowledge and training '*they start to want to work, simply by seeing others… when I get the profit, they see this and come to start the work, they don't love the work, they simple see the profit.'* There were also cultural barriers to women's involvement – '*women in our culture have a lot of work in home, if her family understands then they support her in home, otherwise she cannot work outside.'* She described her situation as unusual, in that her male children provided support – '*when I had to spend a lot of time in the production place for two years, my sons cooked wot for their father, they washed their clothes, they understand the profit and supported me*'. However other women were likely to face resistance to changing this arrangement – '*women cannot face their families to tell them what to do to help, to tell them 'it is not only my work to do these things, you must help'.'*

Meron's experiences raise many interesting questions about access and success in small commercial poultry farms, and the specific challenges that women may face in keeping chickens at this scale. Scaling up poultry production is often cited as being a

key tool in poverty reduction, and specifically for the empowerment of women, as the titles of these two blog posts from Oxfam demonstrate: 'Tanzania: Fighting poverty in their own backyard'[34] and 'Counting on chickens? Empowering women in agriculture'[35], and this from Australian Aid 'Chickens: the key to making poverty history?'[36]. World Vision, who distribute poultry in the area of study around Bahir Dar, promote the distribution of chickens on their donation page ($25 for two chickens) with the following text:

> *"**Sometimes miracles come with feathers.** Chickens and their eggs are a beautiful gift of nutritious food for a hungry family… Your gift of chickens will also naturally multiply to impact generations of children. Each family that receives chickens can sell the offspring for extra income or share them with other families in need. Chicks require little money, space, or food to thrive and grow — making them an ideal business venture for a single mom or vulnerable family."*[37]

However, while this scale of production is often presented as a route out poverty, Mcleod and colleagues (2009) warn that these will be the most subject to competition in the future, particularly those that supply market chains to urban populations. They identify the following conditions as linked to success: 'the ability to meet market requirements, a good business model, access to support services, a reliable source of finance, and a reliable source of labour' (p195). As Meron hinted

[34] https://www.oxfam.org/en/countries/tanzania/tanzania-fighting-poverty-their-own-backyard

[35] https://blogs.oxfam.org/en/blog/12-03-14-counting-on-chickens-empowering-women-agriculture

[36] https://australianaid.org/2015/12/16/chickens-the-key-to-making-poverty-history/

[37] http://donate.worldvision.org/2-chickens

at, the extent to which I have observed the small-scale commercial poultry production sector around Bahir Dar is able to meet this conditions, is varied. I will discuss her experiences and those of other semi-intensive producers I was able to interview, in relation to some of these constraints, and in particular the extent to which women are able to access potential benefits of these developments.

Profiles

The respondents described there being around 10 semi-intensive poultry producers at one site, of which only one was a woman, and about 50 known producers around Bahir Dar. The profiles of the respondents were extremely varied. We spoke to three women who were chiefly responsible for the business and two young couples who had decided to start the business together. The remainder of the group consisted of men who had started the business in partnership with others.

Kalkidan, one of the female business owners, met us in a café in town, in between dealing with business matters. She had been employed in the Middle East as a domestic servant, and had seen there how chicken could be prepared and stored for long periods in the fridge. When she returned to Ethiopia, she bought a fridge and started her own business, preparing and selling chickens to hotels. Part of the start-up costs for the chicken business came from money she had saved while working abroad, and the remainder from running a café, and growing vegetables and fruit on land she had received from her family. She was part of a similar women-only training group to Meron, and at the end of the 45 day period, she bought chickens from the other 9 women to prepare the chickens for sale.

There has been a growing trend for young people to migrate out of rural areas, due to a shortage of employment opportunities, and a loss of hope in the education leading to good jobs. Many young people believe that they cannot change their lives without migration, and whilst boys tend to migrate within the country, girls go to the Middle East for domestic service (Tefera, Pereznieto, & Emirie, 2013, p. 20). Whilst there are conflicting narratives of this migration as either 'trafficking' or 'future seeking', the picture may be more complex. Some families may push girls to migrate, as daughters are considered more reliable remitters than sons (Jones et al., 2014). The difficulties that girls may face by migrating illegally or legally are well-documented, such as deception of the brokers and agencies, finding themselves without papers and unable to leave, debt bondage, and emotional, physical and sexual abuse at the hand of their employers (Beydoun, 2006; De Regt, 2010; Jones et al., 2014). Many choose to take the risk, paying brokers above the legal cost (Fernandez, 2013), either for the perceived benefits, or because they consider the alternatives worse. There is a perception that women return from the Middle East with 'gold and nice clothes' (De Regt, 2010), and male friends of mine reiterated that belief, that it was a good thing to marry someone who had returned to Ethiopia, as they were rich. Women may also believe that the hardships they might face would be better than taking loans, and that on their return they would be able to open cafes or restaurants (Tefera et al., 2013). Some women, like Kalkidan, may be successful in achieving this, and others may continue to use this as a livelihood strategy, and return to the Middle East for second or third contracts (Fernandez, 2010).

For those who could not, or did not wish to migrate abroad, options were more limited. In-country migration for work may not result in a significantly higher

contribution to the household income than for children who stay at home (Gibson & Gurmu, 2012). University graduates often struggle to find appropriate work – both of my female assistants had achieved their degrees a few years previously and had not yet found regular work when I met them, and there was always a large group waiting by the large notice board in the centre of town where job advertisements were posted. Part of this level of unemployment could be explained by the concept of '*yiluññta*', shame based on what others think and say about a person and their family, in which it would be undesirable to take low-status employment, as this would lead to a loss of respect (Mains, 2007). However, it is also due to the relatively low level of private sector employment available, and low rates of remuneration in public sector work. In Ethiopia, traditionally well-considered roles, such as in the civil service, do not offer the chances for an improved life as they once did (Jones et al., 2014), and even teachers, who have clearer promotion paths than in other government employment, may have to negotiate bribery and favouritism (Plummer, 2015). Countries where the majority of graduates enter public sector employment often see a lower rate of return on investment in education (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004), and this has been observed in other African contexts, such as Tanzania (Kombe, 2005) and Uganda (Reynolds Whyte, 1997).

Thus starting a poultry enterprise as a full-time role could be the best option for young people with a sufficient level of education to access the training. As some of the young men told me, it promised a chance 'to live a better life', and better profit than other possible businesses they could have started – such as metalwork, spinning or restaurants. Both the male and female poultry traders also stated that this was their reason for starting that business. One young man, Gebre, had actually left his

government job to produce chickens full-time as he made much better money. However, the others had professional jobs as veterinarians, engineers or government employees. The role of small scale commercial keeping as an alternative or secondary source of income for men has also been observed elsewhere, for example a study by Amos (2006) in Ondo State, Nigeria, found that the majority of small scale commercial poultry producers were male, younger than 50, with tertiary education, and that many were also civil servants, or had other businesses. In her study in Botswana, Hovorka (2006) found that some men started poultry businesses as a secondary source of income, and to ensure financial security. In her study, as well as my own, the men who were currently employed elsewhere had experience of the poultry industry either directly through their work, or through friends and their families. For example Sirasew, an engineer by training, is able to visit regularly and learn from one of the largest industrial poultry and egg producers in Ethiopia, as it is owned by the relatives of one of his close friends. The others started through participating in small enterprise programmes, similar to the women-focussed programmes, where they received training and land from the government.

Contacts

The importance of networks of contacts in accessing these businesses is clear in the examples from both the male and female business owners. Like the farmers who complained that only those who were friends with extension agents benefited from the extension programs, producers had experienced difficulties with negotiating different aspects of regional government and bureaucratic demands without the assistance of personal contacts. Involvement with networks of government

employees allowed both men and women to access training or programmes directed at starting and expanding small enterprises in these peri-urban areas, such as Meron, who benefited from her neighbour's connections in the government. Two of the key barriers to starting these businesses were access to capital, and access to land, and due to the significant role of the state these were accessed through these same networks of contacts.

Loans

Whilst many of the young male producers had been able to raise the capital themselves, others needed to borrow to meet the initial investment costs, or to expand their business. People told me that they used to borrow money from the Church, but that this no longer occurs, possibly due to the reduced power of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as a result of political changes (Desplat & Østebø, 2013; Haustein & Østebø, 2011), or due to the comparatively high rates of interest charged. Siyoum et al. (2012), working elsewhere in the Amhara region, found that farmers mostly accessed credit through three routes – the Amhara Credit and Savings Institute (ACSI), government food security credit, and informal credit (through friends and relatives). They reported a move towards more formal forms of credit, as more money could be borrowed, and growing poverty meant that few people could afford to lend money informally. People only accessed credit from the Church, '*iddir*' (funeral associations) and *'mehaber'* (religious associations), if they needed to borrow both cash and grain. Looking at micro- and small enterprises across Ethiopia, Ageba and Amha (2006) found that informal and trade loans were most common,

followed by *'iqqub'* (a rural saving association), and with very low levels of borrowing from both banks and microfinance institutions.

Lack of collateral is a major barrier to accessing formal credit, especially for the very poor. For example, Siyoum et al. (2012) found that people were not able to meet the requirements for ACSI as they owned neither oxen nor land, and were excluded from the groups formed for access to loans. For those I spoke to who did own land, it was sometimes considered to be too small to act as collateral. In addition, ACSI requires land certificates to act as a guarantee, but due to ongoing issues with land rights, which I discussed in **[House]**, pe ople told me they were unable to provide the proper documents. This lack of legal titles for assets has been identified as a significant challenge facing micro-finance institutions in Ethiopia (Kereta, 2007). It was not just land documentation that people were unable to supply. Tigist, whose primary income was from producing chicken feed, wanted to invest in her business, but told me that she did not have the ID card necessary to get the loan, and she did not have the contacts to get the ID card. This was particularly a problem as she had built a business in a rented site – so she was unable to get loans to expand their businesses as she could not borrow against the land. She worried that landlord could take loans using the successful business running on the site as proof that they were able to pay it back, as she put it: '*Yes, the government officials suppose he is doing the business here, because I am doing the work he is supposed to do, and he collects money for rent from me… who knows, he can borrow money, because the house is already working, what doesn't work is the man!*'

There is a belief that farmers would misuse the money that were given, and not be able to pay it back. Weak recollection efforts by credit-providing organisations has created what has been described as a 'non-repayment culture' (Ageba & Amha, 2006). As one government employee told me – '*poor people don't care because the government will not force them to sell something to pay it back, because there is nothing [to sell]*'. Mariam and Amare, a married couple who kept chickens at one of the peri-urban sites, were both HIV positive, and had experienced a great deal of discrimination and resulting disruption in their lives. In the four years they had been together, they had moved as many times. They had received support from the government as a result of their illness, and the friendship Amare had built with one of the government employees had enabled them to get advice on how to care for the exotic chickens. They began with only 5 chickens, keeping them in the traditional way, but with this support they had expanded into keeping around 100, as well as preparing their own feed mix to save costs. Despite the hard work and success they had achieved, they had also experienced negative reactions and accusations of begging when trying to access capital to expand their business. As Amare told us "*the government, those relevant bodies, they don't believe us, they say sarcastically "are you going to work and pay back the money?!" and laugh, because most people in our situation, they only eat the money.*"

The expression 'eating money' is common, and may refer to corruption in Greece (Heidenheimer, 2011, p. 151), bribes in Kenya (Schmidt, 2014, p. 10) or kickbacks and embezzlement in West Bengal (Ruud, 2000, p. 283). Another use of it is to describe a waste of resources, such as an Senegal (Sheff, 2009, p. 1) or Tanzania, where the phrase 'eating money' for the Haya, refers to – '"*finishing off*" *the value of an object*

or a relationship, usually for deceptive and individualistic purposes', for example selling off the family farm and eating the money from the sale, rather than eating the food generated by the land (Weiss, 1997, p. 167). The use I met in Amhara is more similar to this use, referring to spending the money on short-term consumable needs.

Haile, a small business owner in Medamma in the peri-urban fringe of Bahir Dar, told us about failure of micro-lending in the area: '*At one time they give some amount of money, I don't know the exact amount, maybe 1500 birr, and the intention of donors is to help women keep chicken, but there is no follow up, so they use the money to buy food to eat… they misuse the money – if there is a follow-up, the women will improve themselves.*' Lemlem, one of the women who had received this money, gave us her opinion of what had occurred: 'T*hey don't give the money for free, they want us to pay back over a long time, but don't give advice what to do. [They] don't give [the money] for special purpose, only [for women] to boost their business… [They give money] to women without land… [Businesses] such as selling araqi... With that money I bought a sheep, [and] that sheep died, so I lost 1000 birr, if I had chickens I would have benefited. The sheep died from disease. We had 2 days training, they told us to keep sheep... so the money has its own purpose, not just for anything... many people consume it right away.'*

Describing these uses of loans in this way can also fail to acknowledge farmers reasons for making these decisions. Diverting loans to household consumption needs can be an essential strategy for households facing drought and poor harvests (Siyoum et al., 2012). In addition, it can be a form of risk aversion, rather than investing all of the money in one place, as Lemlem described above. Both Lemlem and Haile mention

problems with the way in which microfinance has been offered – such as a lack of follow-up, and inappropriate advice on how the money should be invested. For example, the "women's development package" set by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, is rarely adapted to each locality. It emphasises poultry, small ruminants and home gardens, which has been criticised as being inappropriate for female household heads in some districts, who cannot raise chickens as they often work outside of the home, weeding for male farmers to earn income (Cohen & Lemma, 2014).

Amare suggested that the group guarantee aspect of these types of loans was one of the major problems with it -

[Am]: Mostly the government gives loans in groups, and people in group don't trust each other, they eat whatever they have, they don't have any trust in each other, and others who are in this situation are very '*hasab dekama*' (tired thought or spirit – best translated to disheartened) they will lose that money on drinking and other things that are not supposed to do..

[Me]*: They get a loan in a group and then separate the money?*

[Am]: Yes they split the money, but finally one will be caught responsible for this money.

[Me]: *It will only be the person who has used the money wisely, as no-one else will be able!*

[Am]: Yes... it is '*kabad*' (difficult), this keeps you away from loans.

While community based credit, such as '*iddir*', may still be used, applications to borrow money are made against short-term shocks, such as illness or destruction of

property (Dercon, De Weerdt, Bold, & Pankhurst, 2006). Formal group finance can create more conflict, due to the monitoring of loans, returns and risks (Gobezie, 2010).

Land

One of the major issues facing farmers was about land policy – regardless of the contacts that they had. Laws around land rights in Ethiopia have undergone many changes. Traditional land rights, allowed peasants '*rist*', land-use rights, administered under '*gult*' (or '*gwilt*') fief-holding rights by the economic and political elite (Hoben, 1973). It is estimated that there were over one hundred types of land tenure under this system (Teklu, 2005), and was one of the key areas of reform under the communist Derg in 1975. The party promise 'land to the tiller' aimed to remove land from the hands of landlords and make it available to the farmers who worked it. However, rather than giving farmers the opportunity to own the land, all land was made state property (Abbink, 2011), and the nationalised land of nobilities, churches and feudal landlords was redistributed through peasant associations (Adenew & Abdi, 2005). Alongside this, the policy of resettlement and villagisation, to level population in the north of Ethiopia, and using undeveloped land in the south, was escalated under the Derg, through the Government Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, and within 10 years of the revolution, nearly 200,000 people had been displaced within the country (Pankhurst, 1992). After the overthrow of the Derg, the EPRDF again changed land rights, so that while land remained state property, people had entitlement to areas of land through holding rights (Adam, 2014). While rural land rights have strict restrictions on sale or transfer, except through inheritance by

family members, urban land rights are more flexible, allowing the leaseholder to donate, mortgage and sell the lease right. Technically land rights in peri-urban areas are under the rural landholding system, but as urban areas reach their boundaries, they are included in urban or municipal territory, and the lifetime lease of the farmer, is cancelled and replaced by the leaseholding system, paving the way for urban residents and investors (Adam, 2014).

Since the late 1990s, domestic investors, both private, and affiliated with the ruling party, have bought land rights for commercial agriculture for export, and by 2010, large amounts of land were being leased to overseas companies. Although the intention was that these deals would bring the potential economic growth, in particular of productive capacity, and skill transfers, they have been criticised for failing to achieve any of these aims, and for 'selling-out' the land 'which was for ages the core element of national or ethnic group identification and the source of people's livelihood, identity and pride' (Abbink, 2011, p. 515).

In the area of study, as the city of Bahir Dar has expanded, and the roads improved, the boundaries between urban and rural have become more blurred – areas once several hours walk from the city can now be reached in less than an hour by public minibus. The areas on the fringe, such as Medamma, are in the process of change. As sites for universities and industry are developed, farmers have had many of their plots taken from them, and farming is no longer sufficient for income. A few find work as guards or labourers, and although compensation is offered, most lack the skills or education for alternative sources of income.

Mekonnen (2011), studying the impact of urban expansion on agricultural land in Bahir Dar, found that not only does urban expansion make residents of rural communities (who do not necessarily all have land rights) 'jobless, landless' and without basic services, but also leaves them unable to access social assets such as farmers associations and work groups, a problem exacerbated by relocation to different areas around the city. In addition, the non-farm economic sector does not have the capacity to absorb the unskilled labour of displaced farming communities.

People who had not done so already, were worried about losing their land to investors – '*people think they will have this land for good, but one day the government will come and take it away'*. New ways were found of extracting money from the land – for example, planting fruit trees to increase the amount of compensation money that could be gained in the future. Another way involved the 'sale' of land – as one person explained '*now the farmers are selling their land for people… but actually it is illegal, now the government destroys the houses and imprison farmers to give back the money, but the farmers say we can't because we don't have this money'.* What had been farmland has become areas of investment – such as factories, universities, flower farms - or sites of informal urban agriculture, in which small plots were owned and farmed by urban dwellers. For example, Abraham took me to visit a site on the outskirts of Bahir Dar, close enough to the shores of Lake Tana for it to be used for irrigation. A large area was separated into small plots, growing high value crops such as chat or fruit trees. Abraham farmed a plot belonging to a friend of his, who had rights to use this land, but was not interested in using it during this period of the year. While most of the sites were visited by urban dwellers in the evening, there were a few people living on the site who farmed their own plots and took care of the others.

A similar pattern is found elsewhere in Ethiopia – for example studies in Mekele found that urban agriculture takes place on small plots (of less than 0.5 ha), and that farmers have a wide range of additional occupations including labourers, guards, shopkeepers, carpenters, traders and hotel management (Ashebir, Pasquini, & Bihon, 2007). Urban agriculture has been broadly defined as "the growing of plants and the raising of animals for food and other uses within and around cities and towns, and related activities such as the production and delivery of inputs, processing and marketing of products" (Veenhuizen & Danso, 2007, p. 1), and was been recognised by the United Nations Development Programme as a significant area of development, starting with the establishment of the Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee in 1991, and followed by the Support Group of Urban Agriculture in 1992. While this definition is broad, I have used it her to refer to small-scale production, either taking place in a similar system to rural farming, or as a supplementary source of income or consumption, for those with other employment within the urban areas. This pattern has also been observed in the capital Addis Ababa, with crops and livestock produced for home consumption, sale, or both (Duressa, 2007; Kebbede, 2011).

The dedicated sites for livestock production were more in line with sites of investment, rather than small-scale urban agriculture, particularly as a large amount of capital had to be found to set up intensive production. However many people complained that the land policy had made it difficult for businesses to expand. Land rights were given for five years, regardless of the size of the investment and bank loans covered a ten-year repayment period. Plots within these sites were supposed to be given following application with business plans, but there was a belief that many had been given based on personal contacts. Many people built the barns and

housing necessary for the production business on site, then rented out the site. Their tenants were often caught in a difficult position – the landlords were not supposed to rent out the plots, they were supposed to work in the plots themselves. Many of the smaller producers had invested their money into their businesses, but had no rights over the space, and could be moved if the landlords wanted to rent to someone else. For those without land, capital or contacts, there were little alternatives to entering into these arrangements. People worried about landlords and their rights to the land and the business:

> '*If you don't do this business, people won't rent you this house, because they want to show the government they are working as they are supposed to... I have to rent and do this work… the government officials they try to register which house is functional or not, they register this house as functioning, now he can secure a loan based on this, but we can't*' [Amare]

However, even in these dedicated sites, people had also experienced issues with promised infrastructure not arriving in time, meaning that they did not have clean water or electricity to keep barns warm. The lack of infrastructure limits the potential of expansion of businesses – for example, they see no point in investing in a fridge or freezer for storing of prepared chickens if the electrical supply is irregular. The lack of ability to maintain a 'cold chain' is also a major barrier in veterinary diagnosis, prevention and treatment.

Market

Once the problems with setting up the business, and accessing the inputs for it to continue, have been overcome, the market was raised by both farmers and commercial chicken producers as being a key constraint. For farmers, it was the instability of price and demand. The producers of live chickens do not have a clear market, as farmers may buy a few birds from them directly, or government or NGOs may purchase them in large numbers for distribution projects. However, farmers often complained that there was insufficient supply of these birds for production, and that they had been kept waiting by the extension offices. As one woman in Anestenya Wenz told us: '*[they] promised to give us exotic by 'got' [part of a village], but they did not give this 'got'… they give the training for women and when they told them the price, [the women] told them the price is high, you have to give chickens for free... they agreed but only gave [chickens] to another 'got' for free. The date is passed, still they don't give [them]'*.

This slow distribution, and the lack of availability of exotic chickens for production in rural and smaller markets, had driven the direct purchase by farmers from the peri-urban chicken producers. Due to the issues with exotic chickens farmers discussed previously in [**Extensive**] - that is, exotic chickens are more prone to disease and predation, and are not good at hatching eggs - farmers are primarily concerned with maximising egg production for sale, and often want to buy only females. The producers of chickens for meat do have clear potential buyers, but due to the cyclical nature of production, are unable to provide chickens at a constant pace, and so find it difficult to enter into supply contracts. In addition, poor infrastructure and the

prohibitive cost of cars makes it difficult to access the sites for potential buyers – or to exit the sites for producers. One way suggested to better access the market is to form co-operatives or associations. Sirasew proposed that only by small-scale producers acting together they could compensate for the cyclical nature of the businesses, and produce a more steady supply of freshly prepared meat and eggs to restaurants and cake makers. It would also make accessing resources only available in Addis Ababa or Debre Zeit more affordable, such as vaccinations, medication, day-old chickens from the research centres in Debre Zeit, and the meat and bones used in feed production. Whilst small groups may share the costs, such as Meron and her friends hiring a car to buy day-old chicks together, more formal associations are unusual in the poultry business.

The Derg set up Agricultural Producer Co-operatives (CAP) for farmers, in which they pooled land, draught animals and farm implements (Crewett, Bogale, & Korf, 2008). Some of these still exist today, for example in Addis Ababa one of the co-operatives has multiple functions, such as repairing dams and irrigation channels, buying seeds and fertilizers in bulk to distribute to farmers, and collecting land taxes from members to fund the revenue department of the sub-city administration (Kebbede, 2011). There is a lot of interest in agricultural co-operative formation by the government, especially for the purpose of marketing (Tegegne, Tadesse, Alemayehu, Woltedji, & Sileshi, 2002). Specific producer cooperatives do exist, for example for *teff* (Minten et al., 2013). There are multiple associations for the marketing and processing of milk, which shares features with poultry products, such as being highly perishable, and requiring rapid transport to consumers or processing (Holloway, Nicholson, & Delgado, 1999; Tassew & Seifu, 2009). In Bahir Dar, there are two

associations of milk producers, who collect and process milk together, selling fresh whole milk, skimmed milk, butter and *ayib*, a traditional cottage cheese, to individual consumers and retailers across the city (Tassew & Seifu, 2009).

Sirasew told us how they had hoped to emulate the one known poultry association, the Ethiopian Poultry Producers Association, which is based in Addis Ababa. It has good relationships with the Ethiopian government and foreign donors, and the producers in Bahir Dar want to replicate this, by forming their own association, to communicate between the regions, and with governmental organisations. They organised a workshop for training, and discussed with some other small poultry farm owners, different organisations and funding bodies how this could be helpful. However, he told me that a license from the government is required to make an association, and this was refused – he believed that there was an interest in keeping the poultry farms separate. In addition to structural barriers to forming associations, he suggested the small producers themselves acted as a barrier to cooperative formation. Although there had been interest in forming an organisation, people were not interested in sharing their knowledge and ideas. Betelhem did not believe that people could work well in a group, she used the proverb 'የግድግድ ቤት ጎይዘጋ የድራል' '*in the house of those that do gidgid (everyone giving everyone else instructions), the door will remain open*', similar in meaning to the English proverb 'too many cooks spoil the broth'.

Both the farmers and traders I spoke to about forming co-operatives dismissed the idea as something that would not work. This may be due to the history of cooperatives in Ethiopia. While the CAPs introduced by the Derg were in theory,

voluntary, there are multiple reports of membership by force (Crewett et al., 2008), or of exclusion by choice of co-operative members or due to an unaffordable rate of membership (Bernard & Spielman, 2009). These co-operatives also came into conflict with rural voluntary associations, such as '*iddir*' which provided mutual aid during bereavement (Pankhurst, Damen, & Mariam, 2000). As the role of co-operatives has grown, involvement in them has become more complex. For example, rural cooperatives are often responsible for the import, wholesale and retailing of fertiliser, and the provision of credit (Bernard & Spielman, 2009). As with the extended roles of the extension agents (see **[Extensive]**), this may lead to resistance from farmers.

Gender and access to intensive chicken production

Meron mentioned the larger farms being run by educated and professional men – and it is clear that men dominate this industry, in particular that the larger scale businesses are run by men and not women. Like Meron, who said she was the only woman from her group to still be keeping chickens, Kalkidan told us that only five from her group were still working in the chicken industry and making profit. Poultry is presented as a highly suitable enterprise for women to participate in, as theoretically it entails a scaling up of a traditional income generating activity that women are responsible for (Woldegies, 2014). If this is the case, why were men dominating the small-scale commercial production of poultry in Bahir Dar? In this last section, I consider the gender-specific barriers to accessing the poultry industry.

Women experienced a more pronounced inability to access contacts. Tigist, told us "*if you have no contacts, you have nothing*" – she had seen her neighbour learn from

her business preparing chicken feed, and he had been given his own piece of land to continue, whilst she was stuck in a precarious position renting. But she also told us that she felt unable to go to the government offices alone or in a group, as there weren't any female employees, except in the Women's Bureau. Restrictions on women's behaviour, such as travel or being alone with a man, can limit their ability to access services. A lack of female agents may also prevent women from accessing credit and extension programmes or information (Gobezie, 2010; Mogues et al., 2009), and this has been recognised in some places with better distribution of female extension agents (Shiferaw, 2008). Male extension agents may be prevented from speaking directly to women due to these cultural barriers, or may prefer to communicate directly with male household members (Giwon, 2011).

This if partly due to beliefs about women's lack of capacity in these matters. Even when an organisation aims to supply 50% of loans to women, men may receive a significantly higher proportion, due to loan officers believing that women did not have the capacity to manage the enterprise or repay loans (IPMS Ethiopia, 2011). Credit and saving workers in Addis Ababa reported in interviews that women don't look for professional advice, do market research, and that they lack (and don't acquire) skills (Belwal, Tamiru, & Singh, 2012). Women themselves reported low levels of marketable skills (Alsop et al., 2006), and both capital and training are identified as barriers to women participating in medium- and large-scale enterprises (Tefera et al., 2013).

Some women I spoke to would agree with this picture of women and small enterprises. Bethlehem provided a contrast to the other chicken producers we spoke

to, who were young, literate, and often had branched from, or built to, other businesses. She told us '*when I came here to Bahir Dar, Giyorgis church was built in wood, but still I don't have my own house'*, meaning in this time, the church has grown into a big complex, but her own life has seen no change. Her mother's sister brought her to the city at a young age, before the military government came to power. She worked as a *säratäña* (housemaid), and received 3 birr/month (about $0.15). She stayed there for about 20 years, and eventually started her own small business independently, selling items on the street. However, about 10 years ago, there was a fire in the market where she stored the items, and she lost all her property and became bankrupt. Her relative owns this compound, and offered her two rooms for free, one for her living quarters and the other for the chickens. She bought 35 chickens on credit from other poultry producers, leaving her with 4000 birr debt. She collects 15 eggs per day and sells them for 2.50 birr each, and after the cost of feed, has about 300 birr net profit a month, which allows her to meet her living costs. After her experiences, she told us '*I am happy now I have chickens and somewhere to live*'. She noted that poultry is especially suitable for people in her position '*for older people it is a good business, if I have a longer life, I will continue. The older people, they have no money, they have no '*aqïm' *(strength), there is no better work than this. If you want to have sheep or goat or cow, where can you bring this money?*' She emphasised the difference between men and women's prospects in business as '*the men will have other business, they will go out from poultry, but women are restricted to this business'.*

Our other female respondents, building and expanding their businesses, would disagree with this, but they were unusual in this region, in having sufficient education

to be literate. Tigist had got the idea for her feed business from a book she read about poultry, experimented with mixtures, and then posted adverts around the city. On the gate to her property is a printed sign advertising their 'best chicken feed'. The others had been able to attend training which was supported with information packs. As her experiences throughout this chapter suggest, she would agree with identification of obstacles facing women entrepreneurs by others as appropriate working places, and capital (Woldegies, 2014). When I asked her why more women weren't involved, she answered '*It is money, men have some money.'*

Figure 19. Sign reading: Best chicken feed available

Tradition was also identified by some of the male producers as a barrier to women's involvement in the poultry sector. In Gebre's company they had only one woman, out of a group of six people, and in the site there was only one business run by women.

He told us '*nowadays women also understand and get interested [in profit] – and in other businesses women are interested – but before because of tradition they were not involved'*. One of his friends, Zewdu, who runs a poultry business at the same site, expanded '*I think women think that they are not able to do this work – it needs more care [than traditional methods], it takes more time, and it is far from home..'.* Cultural expectations for women to stay in the home, and care for the family and the household has been identified as a barrier for women wishing to participate in small enterprises (Belwal et al., 2012). Looking at extensive and intensive poultry keeping systems in Kenya, Vincent et al. (2011) found that women were less likely to exercise control over the poultry enterprise in intensive production systems. It required more labour and capital input than the extensive system and made greater demands on women's unpaid labour, thus the transition from keeping chickens in the home to out of the home, in out-of-town dedicated sites, could exclude women from participating in commercial poultry businesses.

The younger male producers often lived on site together, and took shifts to care for the chickens and provide protection – this also saved them having to pay for guards. This arrangement would have been more difficult for women who were unmarried, or who had already established households elsewhere. Both married couples we spoke to lived on site, and Meron and Kalkidan had multiple businesses and could afford to have employees living on site instead. The third woman, Bethlehem, had been given a room in a larger compound by a relative. At Tigist's site there were only two women who ran the businesses alone, although business owners preferred to hire women, as it was reported to me that they could pay them half the amount - about 500 birr ($25) per month, rather than 1000 birr.

Changing relationships with poultry

Tigist thought that the traditional association between women and chickens would enable them to be good at this business '*women take care of chickens much, and she will keep herself busy to arrange things… this business will be much more profitable if it is run by women... there are two things here, she [a woman] is happy when she 'gives regards' to the chickens, and at the same time, she also thinks, I have this money, I am improving myself – she will exert all the effort she has, because she wants to improve her life..'.* It is not only the relationship between women and chickens that brings women pleasure in the business, but what they can achieve through the chickens. Meron was happy that her chicken business had allowed her to improve her family's fortunes, sending her children to school and supporting her son in starting his own business. She had gained recognition from agricultural offices and the university, who sent students to observe and learn from her. For Kalkidan, one of the pleasures was in gaining this specialist knowledge and building her business, but also sharing it with others – '*by teaching others I get happiness, I am happy to show others how to do this for chickens… and for the market, when I show others how to do this, this easy way, they show others and then this creates knowledge in Bahir Dar.'*

However, the removal of chickens from the domestic sphere has reduced women's hold on this form of 'women's business' and changed the relationship between women and chickens. Many respondents repeated that semi-intensive farming of chickens in these peri-urban sites elevated chicken keeping from farming, into a trade, and made it acceptable for men to take part. I observed a similar pattern with poultry traders. As Mariam told us '*it is women who generate money from chickens*

in rural areas... here no problem because it is a trade… here even he [her husband, Amare] takes care of chickens... and I take care of chickens..'. Gebre emphasised the difference, 'i*n urban [areas] men are interested in investing, interested in profit – business is business, not farming'*. Similar transitions from female to male involvement in the poultry industry with increasing intensification and profit have been found elsewhere. Hovorka (2008) found that the increasing status of poultry in Botswana due to state promotion, led to the increased interest of men. This politicisation of particular commodities can impact the access and benefits of particular groups – for example with water rights (Zwarteveen, 1997), or the introduction of market-oriented crops (Njuki, Kaaria, Chamunorwa, & Chiuri, 2011) or other agro-foods (Islam, 2008). It can redefine how the animal is spoken about – Hovorka describes men being interested in chickens as both an economic tool, and a 'hobby', feeling 'the same joy that people do with cattle' (2008, p109). In my own fieldwork, this role of chickens beyond that of economic was well described by Mariam -

[Ma] ...Now I have absolutely fallen in love with chickens, after this I can't live without them.

[Me] Why do you love them so much?

[Ma] One, is their benefit, but also… I have no children, I have no neighbours, I talk with them! Only now he [Amare] is home (because he hurt his leg) [I have someone to talk to]…

Me] He [Amare] laughed when you said you talk to chickens – it is less normal to have that relationship, to love chickens, here, because it is a trade?

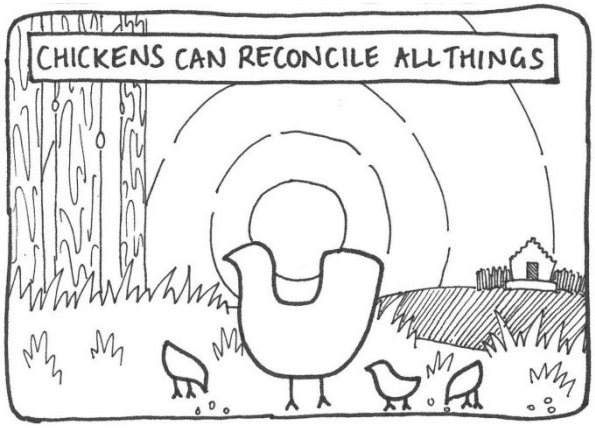
[Am] What makes me laugh, is in the evenings we bring the chickens out, and many

go to her and not to me, and when I remember this, it makes me laugh… they follow her…

[Ma] They are almost like people!

[we all laugh]

Mariam mentions how her social isolation is one of the reasons that she has developed this strong personal relationship with the flock. However, their light-hearted discussion of the behaviour of the flock, suggests that chickens might also inspire 'the same joy as cattle' as Hovorka describes in Botswana above. This relationship between the humans and chickens that she describes, is not so different from that explored in the chapter, **[House]**.



Conclusion

In this thesis I have described the systems of care for poultry, and how they fit into the household in terms of their economic contribution, how they affect the gender distribution of labour, and as symbols for the household itself. I have also attempted to show how poultry, especially village chickens, play an important role in networks between people, and their relationships with the spiritual realm. The previous chapter, on intensive poultry production, demonstrates how changing means of production, and increased prestige and profit, can affect the traditional relationship between chickens and women. Conversations about chickens often started conversations about how the social and economic contexts in which these relationships were taking place are changing, and this is the focus of this final chapter.

Networks

One of the aims of the research was to consider the networks constructed around the village chicken. Studies in industrial poultry production have focussed on processing (Hamilton & McCabe, 2016) and changing marketing and consumption (Striffler, 2005). Village chickens do play an important economic role in the household, as both a direct source of food, and as an indirect source of income. They are also part of larger economic networks, of local producers, traders and consumers, moving from farmers, to traders, to urban centres, where the price for them may be doubled, with no benefit to those in rural areas. They may even be involved in national networks, as traders drive the high-demand red cockerels from the Mecha countryside 500km to Addis Ababa, to benefit from the higher price they can command there. Communication, via national news, telephone and the internet have made consumers in Bahir Dar aware of the elevated prices that these country chickens command in the largest market in the country.

Poultry are also an important part of political networks – as the agricultural extension programmes are often seen as the long arm of the government (Berhanu & Poulton, 2014), the success of programmes to vaccinate, educate, or deliver exotic 'improved' breeds have a strong bearing on how different levels of government are perceived. For example, cases of favouritism or failure to deliver promised services were often blamed on lazy or corrupt agricultural extension agents, rather than the regional or national bodies that supplied them with chickens.

The latter part of the thesis has focussed on poultry in social and cultural networks. The chapter [**House**] demonstrates how chickens reproduce relationships in the

household, and the proper conduct of men and women. Expressions that liken women and chicken in their place in the home, but also to inappropriate behaviour emphasises the low status of women and chickens in Ethiopian society. The ways in which men and women spoke about the care for chickens also reflected the distribution of work and responsibility within the household. Within the village, chickens are part of networks of sharing, gifts and sale. And within social networks, cooking and serving of chickens in the form of *doro wot* is a way of showing respect to guests and family members, smoothing of difficult relationships, and celebrating special occasions. These meals, and the spilling of blood of chickens generally, is a way of maintaining good relationships with the spirits that also share this landscape. Chickens are also parts of indirect networks, such as in common preferences for red chickens for the celebratory events of both Christians and Muslims, and the idea of *doro wot* as the national dish of Ethiopia.

This reinforces the idea of animals as being 'good to think' and 'good to eat', and 'good to live with' (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010). While the status of a chicken as 'pet' or companion animal is often ambiguous due to its dual role as livestock (Blecha & Leitner, 2014; Kaylor, 1909), others have used them as companion animals in forms of therapy (Murray, 2004; Winner, 2014), and historically in Asian and Europe, chickens have been intentionally buried with their human owners (Storey et al., 2012). Animals being kept as livestock also does not prevent people from forming emotional bonds with them, for example people may find psychological and physical security in their connection with individual animals, such as goats (Walsh, 2009), and the affectionate relationship between men and their cattle has been well-documented in East Africa (Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Galaty, 2014). People have also

written of deep bonds between people and sport birds – the bond between pigeon racer and their favourite bird in working class Britain has been described thus 'The fancier loves his birds whilst the unmatchable long distance pigeon is true unto death. May this spirit of eternal loyalty and matchless purpose bind us together in all good works' (Johnes, 2007, p. 367). The 2012 film, ManDove, focusses on the relationship between men and singing doves in Indonesia (Seve & Tjong, 2012). Romantically described in the press, the birds 'cast spells on Indonesian men, taking them away from their wives, and pitting them against each other to prove their masculinity' (TIDF, 2012), the DVD cover is more direct: 'Real men need doves'. The writer and falconer, Helen Macdonald's recent memoir, 'H is for Hawk', vividly recounts the author's struggles to build trust with, and her retreat into the world of, a goshawk, Mabel, whilst grappling with personal loss (2014).

In Ethiopia, while they may not achieve the status of a pet, the chicken is considered part of a proper rural household, and as something 'good to put your eyes on' – the phrase women used to describe the enjoyment of watching chickens. Chickens may also be associated with people in less explicit ways – they may *be* food, but they also share food. They eat scraps of *injera*, sometimes pecking at them before the other household members have had a chance to eat them, eat the husks of beans or corn that are spat onto the floor, and sometimes put their heads into coffee cups after people have finished drinking. They also spend much of their time in the same physical space as the rest of the household – spending their days near the house, and sleeping inside the house – sometimes even under the bed. Thus Haraway's description of 'companion' originating from the Latin '*cum panis'* (with bread), (2007) is appropriate to how we might think about chickens. People may not just share food,

sleeping spaces and daily activities with non-human animals, but may even include them in religious or spiritual practice as participants (Holak, 2008), rather than as sacrifice as economic objects, or substitutes for human blood.

The context of the research

I have tried to position this thesis in the body of work on relationships between humans and animals, and more generally in the field of multi-species ethnography. While contributing to this academic field, this research was produced with the support of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Amhara Regional bureaus of Agriculture and Culture, and with the participation of the farmers of my field sites in Mecha and Bahir Dar Zuria. I felt that it was important that this research is not only of relevance to the academic field of anthropology, but has some real-word use or impact that can positively affect those who took the time to participate. One way in which this can occur is by describing the cultural, rather than purely economic or practical, context for production, in particular as poultry has been a major focus of investment in Ethiopia for both the government and NGOs. Previous research in Ethiopia have offered attempts to characterise the context of production beyond the economic and technological realm, for example preferences for colour (Dessie and Ogle, 2001, 532), and extra-culinary uses (Aklilu et al., 2008, 178). While there is a danger that an in-depth study of poultry keeping practices would be "elaborating ponderously on what everybody knows already" (Strathern, 2005b, 131), there is some difference between people knowing a thing, and this influencing actions or policy. Thus one idea that emerged in my early research was that it might

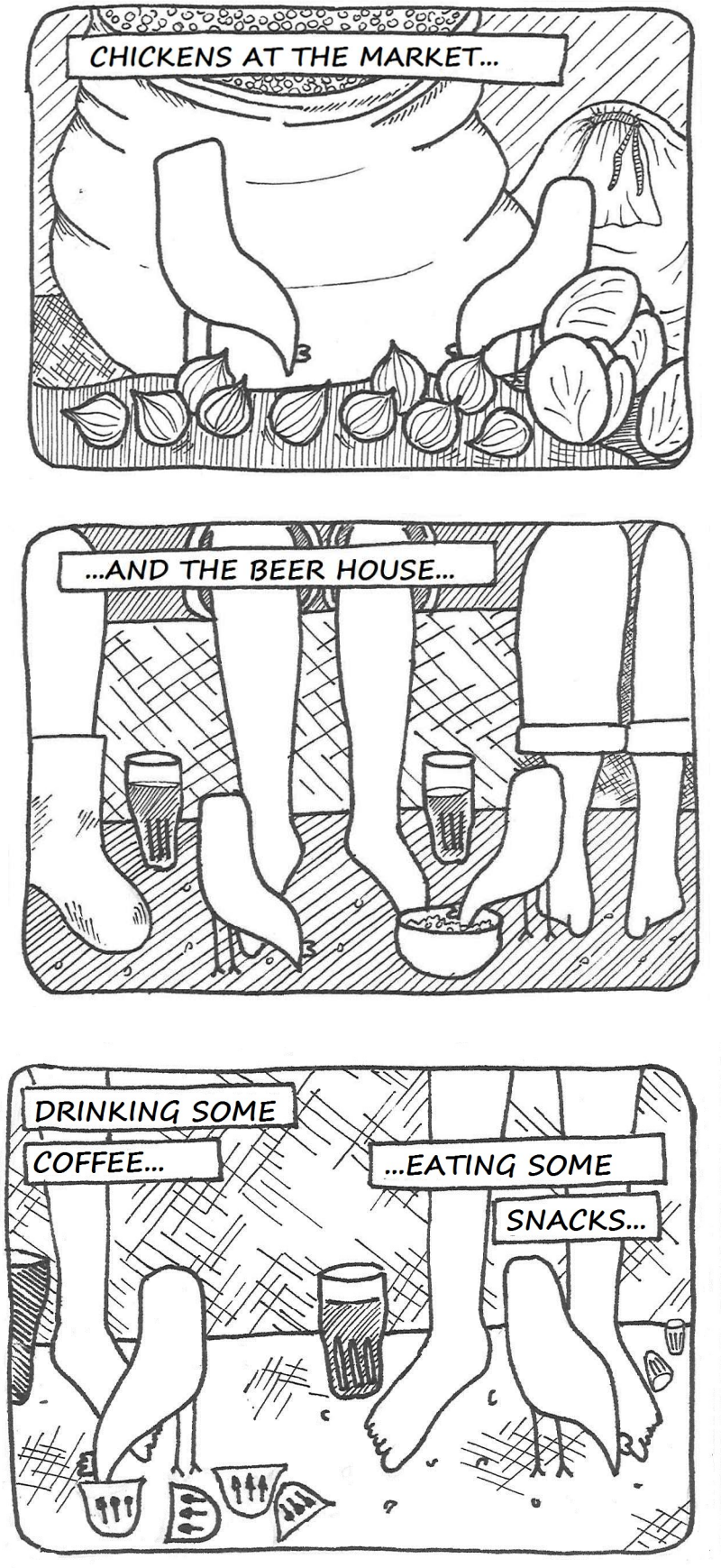


Figure 20. Illustrations. Chickens in the environment.

be both academically and practically valuable and interesting to produce a picture of a typical situation, and work with different actors to show how interventions could be shaped more effectively (Guèye, 2009, 117). For example, previous studies identified that the use of group discussions such as village meetings, led to women's voices not being heard (Aklilu et al., 2008). This is partly because in the Ethiopian context, women have not been viewed as farmers, despite being involved in much of the work (Cohen & Lemma, 2014; Giwon, 2011). In addition, research on women's experiences in Ethiopia have often focussed on issues such as early marriage (Dana, Dessie, et al., 2010), genital modification (Boyden, Pankhurst, & Tafere, 2012), childbirth (Bedford et al., 2013) and other health and social issues (Gossaye, Yegomawork, 2003). This research adds to the body of literature that looks at other aspects of women's lives, such as the work of Lyons and D'Andrea (2003) on cuisines and food technology in Tigray, and the relationships between women and men, the peasantry and the state (H. Pankhurst, 1992).

As discussed at the start of the thesis, a number of issues have been identified in the poultry sector in Ethiopia, including access to markets (Aklilu et al., 2007), absence of immunisation programmes (Dana, van der Waaij, et al., 2010), lack of credit and extension services (Teklewold et al., 2006) and biosecurity, both of current diseases and regarding potential threats of avian flu (Alemu et al., 2008; Bush, 2006). While productive exotic breeds have been distributed in Ethiopia since the 1950s (Teklewold et al., 2006), the penetration of these outside of the intensive production sector has remained low (CSA, 2015). This research has shown that a number of reasons may be behind this – unsuitability of the birds for local production systems due to susceptibility to disease, increased costs associated with special shelter, food

and veterinary care, all of which may make investment in these more expensive chickens impractical for rural households, particularly as these chickens are often distributed in programmes in which a household may be expected to buy 4 or 5 young birds. Beyond the use of these chickens as economic tools, producing higher numbers of eggs for sale, poultry in rural areas also play key roles in celebrating religious festivals and special occasions, particularly for those households who lack the financial or social capital to celebrate with larger livestock. As was often repeated by respondents in my research, the exotic poultry breeds do not have the preferred plumage, comb type or taste for the local culinary and spiritual uses. Thus exotic breeds have faced two key barriers to their uptake in the rural, extensive, system of production – that of a practical and technological unsuitability for local conditions of production, and of failure to satisfy local aesthetics and taste.

The exotic chickens, acting as economic objects, do not fit into the existing production systems or cultural life of farmers who produce chickens in rural Ethiopia. Instead, they are the nexus of new networks and types of relationship between the animals, producers, markets and other bodies involved in their production and consumption. A key way in which this has happened is the separation of chickens from the domestic sphere, into that of industry and business. This has reduced women's hold on what has been considered 'women's business', and changed the relationship between women and chickens. As was repeated by a number of respondents, semi-intensive farming of chickens elevated chicken keeping from farming, into a trade, and made it acceptable for men to take part. The economic networks that exotic poultry are involved in include international breeders and importers of exotic breeds for production, veterinary pharmaceutical companies, agricultural research and

international development bodies, manufacturers of processing equipment, and exporters of meat for consumption. On a more direct level, it configures a new economic relationship between men and chickens, where men are the primary investors and beneficiaries of poultry production – in fact for some men it represented a better source of income than government employment; once seen as a highly desirable position. It removes chickens from both the domestic sphere, and the rural one, instead occurring at dedicated sites in the peri-urban zones, areas of growth and investment for industry, and separate from spaces in which chickens co-exist with people and other livestock. As the conversation with Sirasew in [**Intensive**] showed, they can precipitate more immediate political interactions, for example over provision of water, power and other amenities at sites, access to land and capital, and through the prohibition of associations. As discussed earlier, in both the [**Extensive**] and [**Intensive**] chapters, access to these chickens themselves is a political issue, leading to accusations of cronyism and corruption among local government employees.

Continuity and Change in Ethiopia

While exotic breeds of chickens present a good example of the changing nature of production, and relationships between humans and poultry, they fall into a wider conversation that emerged during fieldwork, about how the context in which these relationships are changing. Introduction of exotic breeds of chickens and the related interventions of government and NGO programs are just one way, but wider social changes including different ways of preparing and consuming food, the changing role of women and movement of young people are also significant. This is a persistent

theme in writings about Ethiopia, which focus on the idea of 'Continuity and change'. Change could be considered both a positive and negative – Ethiopian literature presents the countryside as an area which is indifferent to change – 'what they drink, what they eat, what they see, what they touch - - - these are the things that are truth to them!' – or actively resistant to new ideas, but the countryside is also seen as a place where people want change and progress (Molvaer, 1980, p. 175). In my fieldwork, the co-existence of these two attitudes to 'progress' can be demonstrated when we consider the farmer who proudly sent his four daughters to university, or to those who defied gender expectations of work to sell chickens in the market, with the farmer who complained that women's sense of equality, brought about by government teachings, meant that he could no longer abuse his wife as he had done in the past. Negative changes *were* evident – parents of educated children could find themselves living alone and without the support of a close family group in their old age, relying instead on remittances and buying-in of labour to ensure they kept their land rights. Chickens find their way into speech about change too: in his work with young men in Jimma, in south-west Ethiopia, Mains describes them making comments such as "We live like chickens, we are just eating and sleeping" to express their frustration with the lack of change, progress and resulting meaning in their lives (2007, p. 660).

Drivers of change

Many of the initial papers on continuity and change in Ethiopia focussed on the aftermath of the political upheavals that took place during the 1970s – 1990s, in particular changes in statehood and political power (Adhaha, 1994; Clapham, 1988).

More recent works are less concerned with the political hot topics of the time (such as the Soviet presence in Ethiopia), and put these changes into a historical context, considering the ongoing conflicts with Eritrea and along the other Ethiopian borders, and continued political protest within the country (Barnabas, 2012), or the top-down culture of power, a political tradition described as 'let us talk with the barrel of the gun' (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003, p. 35). One of the major drivers of this political change has been identified as education, specifically the spread of university education. These studies often place Ethiopia in a historical narrative in which it remained closed to outside influence, due to both topographical barriers and cultural preferences for isolation, and self-sufficiency, partly in response to the effects of European colonialism in neighbouring parts of Africa (Clapham, 1988). For example, Wagaw (1990) describes how criticism of the then-named Haile Selassie University (now Addis Ababa University) in the 1960s focussed on expectations that it would be rooted in Ethiopian heritage, history, and address development questions pertinent to the country, and worries that instead its teaching was too secular and foreign oriented (p. 153). Neither is that a historical view, more recent scholars have also complained that: "Western education has alienated Ethiopian intellectuals by uprooting them from their history, culture, language and society" (Tolossa, 2006, p. 1).

University-educated students were described as a major revolutionary force during the overthrow of the empire by the Derg (Markakis, 1989; Van Der Beken, 2009; Wagaw, 1990), and more recently have been strongly associated with political protest, both following the elections in 2005 (Abbink, 2006; HRW, 2005) and during more recent protests in the Oromia region (HRW, 2016). Education was thought to

have effected change in two ways – firstly, through the exposure to foreign politics and experiences, through both international travel for Ethiopian students, and the arrival of students from other African countries to the university in Addis Ababa (Wagaw, 1990). The second could be interpreted as more linked to the education itself – as public education expanded in the 1960s, the first generation schooled in a secular setting came to question traditional religious values with their emphasis on obedience, loyalty and deference to authority (Wagaw, 1990), and through increased political activism, primarily Marxism (Markakis, 1989; Van Der Beken, 2009).

There is a sense that religious institutions wish to play a key role in social change. For example, Abbink (2003) considers the role of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in 'steering a course' between innovation and continuity, and Eide (2000) argues for the Evangelical Church in Ethiopia as not only being an actor in the introduction of education, but as the only ones brave enough to speak out against the Derg policies on religion. Christianity has been a fertile ground for anthropologists to talk about issues of continuity and change (Robbins, 2007; Seeman, 2015), and it is a question I have only been able to touch on this briefly during this research. For example, during my conversation with Deres, in [**Spirits**], he described attempts by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to encourage change, particularly away from non-Christian practices, such as the sacrifice of chickens to *zar* and other spirits. He acknowledged that the challenges the Church faced in the arrival of other religions in this region had forced the church to strengthen people's faith.

This fits within wider literature on the challenges to religion in Ethiopia, in which religious beliefs and practices are subject to political, as well as spiritual, change. In

Southern Ethiopia, young people and women are moving towards the Protestant church, rejecting the 'backward traditions' of the Orthodox church represented by older influential men (Dea & Scoones, 2003). In the Oromiya region of Amhara, an overlap of Sufi Islam, Orthodox Christianity and local possession cults can be found at a Sufi shrine (Eresso, 2015). In the Oromo region, the political context has encouraged 'retraditionalisation' and a resurgence of indigenous beliefs (Osmond, 2014; Regassa & Zeleke, 2016). Throughout this, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has attempted to maintain relevance, by emphasising its role in the cultural heritage of the country (Haustein & Østebø, 2011). The education of priests, as well as more central control, had also brought about changes to how the Church is able to conduct itself in rural areas. Deres mentioned the availability of other interventions in rural areas as a reason for people turning away from 'superstition', such as the availability of clinics. Attempts to abolish *zar* practice have been recorded from the 1830s (Natvig, 1987), and the Derg government wished to limit religious practice to Orthodox Christianity and Islam (Freeman, 2002). In the south of Ethiopia, as world religions have been introduced, traditional possession cults appear to be losing cultural significance (Vecchiato, 1993), possibly due to the emphasis of these religions on traditional spirits as being demonic (and non-Christian) (Seeman, 2015). However, outside of Ethiopia, these *zar* practices are an expression of cultural continuity among Ethiopian Jews who migrated to Israel (Edelstein, 2002).

Change at the local level

Conversations about change in Ethiopia have often focussed on national and political change, and in their study of four rural communities in Ethiopia, Bevan & Pankhurst

(2007) describe few changes in the structure of the local economies since restructuring following the fall of the Derg. In particular, despite land reforms, the tenure system shows commonalities with the traditional *rist* system (Crewett et al., 2008) (see [**Intensive**]), and for much of rural Ethiopia offers low levels of power for facilitating change (Bevan & Pankhurst, 2007). However, they describe a number of potential drivers of change, including existing land shortages, an increasingly educated population, and the politicisation of ethnicity and religion (Bevan & Pankhurst, 2007, p. viii). There is also hope that local organisations, such as *iddir* (funeral insurance groups), have the ability to change, allowing them to continue supporting their communities (Dercon et al., 2006).

As with changes at the national level, education has been a key factor in changes at a regional level. In [**House**] we met Antene, who gave his reasons for keeping chickens despite the attitudes of those around him, as due to his education, and him considering himself to know the 'better way' of doing things, for the fortunes of himself and his family. Education is not only through the school system, but also through extension training and the media (Legovini, 2005; Poluha, 2007; Tilson & Bekele, 2000). However, school and further education, is presented as an important strategy for positive change in rural and poor households. In her work in Tigray, Thera Mjaaland recorded a number of students' attitudes towards education and development, for example, one student told her "…education is the basis of development for yourself and your country; without education there is no kind of change in your life" (2012, p. 140). Students also viewed their education as giving them a responsibility to start this change, by passing on knowledge to others who had not had the opportunity for education, or to go on to do other 'important work'

(p142). The Education and Training Policy that encouraged this view of education as a means to forward the development of the country. This is despite the increased competition for employment for educated candidates, and the reduction in status of civil service roles (Jones et al., 2014; Mains, 2007). Mjaaland also describes a growing schism between those who are educated, are those who are not. Those who were not educated felt inferior and useless, viewing education as a way out of poverty which they cannot benefit from (2012). This reflects Antene's views about how as an educated person, he knew the 'proper' way to do things.

Access to land emerged as a significant topic across the research. In the [**House**] chapter, we observed that many men had chosen to move away from their own families, to live with their wives, contrary to the expected patterns in this area. Land was a significant factor in whether rural households would consider buying exotic breeds of chickens, and in the ability of small intensive poultry producers to start or expand their businesses. In addition, an inability to access land for farming contributed to the need for young people to find alternative employment, for example as traders of chickens, or go seek work elsewhere, a situation that can be seen across Ethiopia (Bevan & Pankhurst, 2007, p. viii). Land in Ethiopia is under continuous change, in particular at the fringes of urban areas, where expansion of towns and cities has led to tensions of rights to that land (Abbink, 2011; Adam, 2014), and which has been a key issue in recent protests in the Oromia region.

Trefon links changes in post-colonial African cities, to 'new forms of solidarity, shifts in family, and inter-generational relations, redefinition of dealings with authority and the state', and with a reconfiguration of the relations between urban populations and

rural areas (2011, p. 421). Whilst Ethiopia never submitted to colonial rule, this recalls the way in which the 'Urban Amhara' drew on their descent from rural areas of Amhara ethnicity in order to assume the role of speaking for all Amhara and gain a right to political dialogue in the early 1990s (Pausewang, 2009, p. 551).

Earlier in the thesis I addressed questions of Amhara identity, and here I focus on how questions of 'identity', 'culture' and 'tradition' are brought to the fore by ongoing politicisation of ethnicity and religion, in the context of political and economic change. In my research, conversations about veterinary care, marketing and use of chickens, often led to discussions about the continued role of tradition – for example, placing eggshells on sticks on the side of houses to protect chicks was explained as something inherited from parents, and explained as simply '*bal' (*culture).

The construction of a pan-Ethiopian 'Amhara' identity, as opposed to a local Gojjame or Gondar identity, is a result of ethnic federalism, rather than arising out a true group identity. In a country in which 'other' Ethiopian identities are purportedly celebrated, while Amhara is associated with a history of oppression, ritual and food may be a safe means by which a cultural identity can be expressed. The construction of 'tradition' in opposition to an 'other' (whether Christian, Western or modern) is one strategy of resistance to an environment that is being changed by external pressures, such as adoption of 'Luo' tribal identity by Dholuo-speaking elites in the 1920s, in response to missionary rejection of pre-Christian practices, and new nationalist ideas (Geissler & Prince, 2010, pp. 46, 95). One form in which this identity has been expressed is through the everyday practice being made into an object of performance of tradition, and recorded in books and on tapes in order to stabilise and preserve it (Geissler &

Prince, 2010, p. 95)**.** In some ways, the stylised way in which costume and dance from across Ethiopia is performed at the cultural clubs, is similar to this. The urban populations who enjoyed these clubs were presented as subjected to change, by education, technology, and a move away from the traditional cultures of the countryside. Thus, enjoyment of a pan-Ethiopian identity through attending these shows was a way in which urban populations, from diverse ethnic backgrounds, were able to maintain links with rural identities.

Food too, has often been written about as a marker of a group identity. In Ethiopia, there are many variants to the diet which can be attributed to local regions, such as the *thollo*, a dough ball dipped in spicy sauce, in Agame in Tigray, on the border of Ethiopia and Eritrea, and *ensete* (*Ensete ventricosum,* known as the 'false banana') in south eastern Ethiopia (Nishi, 2005). Both coffee and *teff* are strong contenders for a food that unites the country, presented as indigenous in the case of coffee (Matsumura, 2006; Yedes et al., 2004) and unique, in the case of *teff* (Lyons & D'Andrea, 2003). However, *doro wot*, is the dish most often described as the Ethiopian national dish, both in academic (Cusack, 2003, p. 279; Dessie & Ogle, 2001, p. 523; Seleshe, Jo, & Lee, 2014, p. 10) and popular sources online[38]. Drawing on the idea of a unified 'Ethiopia' is a strategy used by diverse actors. For example, tourists are sold the idea of a long and continuous 'Ethiopian' past, as part of a package of

[38] Such as these food and travel blogs: http://www.daringgourmet.com/2013/08/27/doro-wat-spicy-ethiopian-chicken-stew/, http://uncorneredmarket.com/ethiopian-food/, http://www.whats4eats.com/poultry/doro-wat-recipe, https://aboutaddisababa.wordpress.com/2013/05/08/doro-wot-traditional-ethiopian-holiday-cuisine/

Ethiopian cultural heritage, rather than the diverse and discontinuous Kingdoms that may have made up this history (Finneran, 2013).

Change and the field

Discussions of drivers of change, as they emerge from the literature and my own fieldwork, do not take into consideration the extent to which these changes have actually occurred. Concerns about change, in particular how to balance traditional values and progress in changing economic conditions, were the subject of novels and other Ethiopian literature during 1900s. As Molvaer describes, 'Without rejecting traditional values, Ethiopian intellectuals want to weed out superstition, to reform and improve old institutions, and to revive values that time may have corrupted' (1980, p. 243), writing about the 'ignorance and bigotry of many priests and the misuses of power and the moral degeneration in the Church' (p243), corrupt bureaucrats who pay lip-service to progress, but fail to act (p178) and the antagonisms between the old and the young, especially those who have been abroad (p218). It would be interesting to see what these writers may have made of recent studies that suggest 100% satisfaction in government extension agents, despite changes to technology or modes of production in only 8% of cases (Mogues et al., 2009).

Inglehart and Baker (2000) summarise two approaches to 'modernisation' and change. One emphasises that the economic and political forces that drive cultural change, lead to the decline of traditional values, and replacement with 'modern' values. The other emphasises the persistence of traditional values despite economic and political change. Arguably, both approaches can occur simultaneously, as the

discussion about changing values, and the assertion of new 'traditional' values and practices, suggests. For example, Yadate and Garoma (2015) note that policies which are favourable to the various languages in Ethiopia (such as primary education in the mother tongue), has meant that young people do not need to abandon their mother tongue in favour of Amharic as they have done in the past. However, they also identified a belief that children were giving up other aspects of their culture due to the influence of foreign cultures. Government efforts to change behaviour seen as undesirable has met with more resistance, such as the persistent belief that normal births should take place at home rather than in clinics (Bedford et al., 2013). While attitudes to female circumcision and early marriage have changed as a result of education programmes and wider social changes, these practices persist due to their local value, such as being able to get married and achieve normal social integration (Boyden et al., 2012).

While the observations of change and continuity during the fieldwork do not relate to matters as serious as these, lessons can be learnt, such as the likely failure to change practices such as sacrifice of chickens, as long as they serve a social function. For example, in the [**Spirits**] chapter, we heard that people continued to sacrifice chickens to the *Abay* (Nile), despite warnings and potential punishment from the priests, because of fears that if they stopped this practice, it could bring misfortune to the family. Many of the young people had begun to question these practices, perhaps as a result of direct teaching, or education that encouraged them to question the basis for these practice, and instead limited their supplementation of pharmaceutical medicine to *tsebel* (holy water) and other Church cures. While changes in attitudes towards gender and status were mentioned by a number of

couples, in particular the younger, educated couples, the level of change described by Woldegies (2014) in which positive proverbs promoting marital equality and women's achievements had emerged, has not occurred in the region of study.

These discussions about change also highlight the difficulty in presenting work that can be relevant at a national level. As the questions about Amhara and Orthodox Christian identity suggest, 'Amhara' is not Ethiopia. Thus, during a limited period of fieldwork, in one area of Ethiopia, it is not appropriate to draw universal conclusions about national distribution and empowerment programmes involving poultry. Agricultural extension activities in other parts of Ethiopia may have to consider the interaction instead between other religions, such as Protestant Christianity, Islam, and traditional Oromo beliefs, and the kinds of change that are taking place in those regions. The expertise does exist – my time spent with agricultural researchers demonstrated that as individuals they held a lot of knowledge about traditional village chicken keeping practices, but that there was little room for them to record or disseminate this information in a way that was seen as valid within their discipline. Strathern speaks of knowledge being 'trapped' within a discipline, when it could be more productive in combination with others (2005b, p. 76), however I was encountering knowledge being trapped in another way – within expert individuals, who did not have the means to express or transmit it within the bounds of their professions (Bammer, 2013, 3).

While in the past, institutions focussing on agricultural research or development have been criticised for ignoring local expertise (Pottier, 1999), and the focus in Ethiopia remains on top-down dissemination of technology (Segers et al., 2009, 97), more

recent work has focussed on farmers' preferences. For example, Dessie and Mwai (2013) presented recent work in Horro, in which participatory rural appraisal was used to identify preferred traits, in plumage colour, productivity and disease resistance. Local chicken breeds were then entered into a breeding programme, in which these traits were selected for, in order to produce improved local breeds, without the need for the introduction of exotic poultry. As they tell us, 'poultry offers poor people [a] pathway out of poverty – by and for the poor', and brings into mind the idiom at the start of this chapter. '*Chickens can reconcile all things',* refers to both their importance in solving problems of health, and social relationships, but also speaks to the hope that poultry may solve other problems in the future.

Ethical Approval

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference LSC 14/108 in the Department of Life Sciences and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on 27/08/2014.

Sample partipant consent forms in English and Amharic are included in the following pages.

University of Roehampton London

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Women and Chicken Husbandry in Ethiopia

Brief Description of Research Project, and What Participation Involves:

This research project aims to gain insight into the gender aspects of chicken management, and how chickens form part of the household, in rural Ethiopia. I am also interested in the significant of chickens in a wider cultural context, such as food, trade, and religion.

This project has the approval of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (please see attached letter). The research will take place primarily in one village, where the researcher will collect information through observation, and formal and informal interviews. Other stakeholders, such as members of other villages, local organsations, traders and marketplace visitors may also be interviewed throughout the course of the research. The setting and timing of informal and formal interviews will be agreed by the participant and researcher beforehand. The researcher may make notes, audio recordings or take photographs or videos as part of the data collection.

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+44 (0)202 8392 3170

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

Consent to use of photographs, filming:

As part of this project, the researcher may wish to take photographs or record events that illustrate aspects of the research. These photographs or videos may be used in the partial or total publication of findings. Where possible, the researcher will record information that does not reveal personal information, and the location of the research and names of participants will be kept confidential through use of pseudonyms. However, it may be necessary to photograph and film participants in such a way that it may reveal identity.

I give permission for my photograph to be used, and agree to waive the right to anonymity. I am aware that I am free to withdraw this consent by informing the researcher at any time.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

I give permission to be filmed, and agree to waive the right to anonymity. I am aware that I am free to withdraw this consent by informing the researcher at any time.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator(or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department.

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የሮሃምተን ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የተካፋይ ስምምነት ወረቀት

የምርምር አርእስት: የሴት እና የዶሮ እርባታ በኢትዮጵያ

<u>በአጭሩ የምርመራው አይነት እና ምን እንደሚያሳትፍ</u>

የዚህ ምርምር እቅድ ስራ ዋና አላማ ስለ ዶሮ ፆታ አስተዳዳሪዎች እና እነዚህ ዶሮዎች በገጠር ኢትዮጵያ

እንዴት የቤተሰብ ቅርጽ እደሚይዙ ነው። በተጨማሪ እኔ ማወቅ የምፈልገው ስለ ዶሮ አጠቃቀም እንደ ምግብ፣ሽያጭ እና ለሐይማኖት እንዴት አስፈላጊ እንደሆነ ነው።

ይህ ምርምራ ከኢትዮጵያ እርሻ ልማት ድርጅት ፍቃድ አለው (እባክዎ የሚቀጥለውን ይመልከቱ)። ይህ ምርምራ በይበጥ በአንድ መንደር ውስጥ ነው የሚሆነው።መርማሪው መረጃዎችን የሚሰበስበው በመመልከት እና ተቀባይነት ባለው ቃለ መጠየቅ ነው።የዚህ ምርምራ ሌላ ተሳታፊዎች የመንደሩ አባሎች፣ድርጅቶች፣ነጋዴዎች እና ገበያ ጎብኚዎች ናለቃል መጠየቅ ቦታና ሰአት ለማዘጋጀት በመርማሪውና በተሳታፊው በቅድሚያ ይስማማሉቸው።

ለቃለ መጠየቁ ቦታና ሰአት ለማዘጋጀት በመርማሪውና በተሳታፊው በቅድሚያ ይስማማሉ። መርማሪው ምዝገውን በካሜራ (ፎቶግራፍ) ወይም ድምጽ በመቅዳት፣ ወይም በወረቀት በመጻፍ መረጃዎችን ይወስዳሉ።

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የስምምነት መግለጫ :-

በዚህ ምርመራ ለመሳተ እሰማማለሁ እና ያለ ምንም ምክኒያት ካልተስማማኝ በፈለኩት ሰአት ማቆም እችላለሁ፣ ይህ ቢሆንም ከማቆሜ በፊት የተናገርኩት ለምርመራው ይወሰዳል። የምሰጠው ማስረጃ በመርማሪው እንደ ምሰጢር (እምነት) ተደርጎ እንደያዝ እና የእኔ ማንነት ሁሉ ጊዜ እንደሚጠበቅ፣ መረጃውም ተሰብስቦ በሂደት የሚውለው በመረጃው የተጠበቀ ህግ 1998 (ኢ.አ) በዩኒቨርሲቲ መረጃ የተጠበቀ መመሪያ ነው።

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የፎቶግራፍ እና የቪዲዮ ቀረጻ ስምምነት:

በዚህ ምርመራ ላይ መርማሪው ፎቶግራፍ ማንሳት ወይም ቪዲዮ መቅረጽ ይፈልግ ይሆናል። እነዚህ ፎቶግራፎች ወይም ቪዲዮች ሙሉ በሙሉ ወይም ግማሹ ይሆናል በመጨረሻው የሚታተሙት። በተቻለ መጠን መርማሪው መረጃዎችን የሚመዘግበው የመደሩን ስም የሰዎችን ስም እና ማንእነት ባለመግለጽ ነው። እንደዚህም ቢሆን በእንደዚህም ቢሆን በፎቶግራፎቹ እና በቪዲዮ ላይ የሰዎቹ ማንነት ይታያል።

ፎቶግራፌ እንዲወሰድ እፈቅዳለሁ እና ለመርማሪው ነግሬ ይህንን ስምምነት በፈለኩት ጊዜ ማቆም እንደምችል አውቃለሁ።

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ቪዲዮኤ እንዲቀረጽ እፈቅዳለሁ እና ለመርማሪው ነግሬ ይህንን ስምምነት በፈለኩት ጊዜ ማቆም እንደምችል አውቃለሁ።

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እባክዎ ይህንን ያንብቡ:- ስለተሳትፎት ወይም ሌላአይነት ጥያቄ ካለዎት መርማሪውን ይጠይቁት(መርማሪው ተማሪ ከሆነ ዋና የት/ቤት አባል መጠየቅ ይቻላል) እንዲሁም ሌላ ነፃ የሆነ ቡድን ለመጠየቅ ከፈለጉ እባክዎ ከዚህ በታች የተጻፈውን ይመልከቱ።

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Predator Photos

These were compiled using a list of species found in Ethiopia from Yumo, http://www.yumo.net/destinations/safari-tours. The Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS), confirmed the species and the translations by email. The images were sourced through a Google search, and were printed locally. It contains a number of predator species which are not found in the highland region, and multiple entries of a few species, which enabled me to explore how people were using the photos for identification.

IMAGES NOT INCLUDED	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED
1 leopard (*panthera pardus) 'nebir'*	2 bat-earedfox (*Otocyon megalotis*) '*joro sefi qebero*'	3 pangolin (*Smutsia temminckii*) '*miist bel'*
IMAGES NOT INCLUDED	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED
4 golden jackal (*canis aureus*) '*tera qebero*'	5 domestic cat (*felis felis*) '*yebet dimet*'	6 cheetah (*acinonyx jubatus*) '*abo shemane*'
IMAGES NOT INCLUDED	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED
7 serval (*felis serval*) '*aner*'	8 aardwolf (*proteles cristatus*) '*qemer jib*'	9 aardvark (*orycteropus afer*) '*aweldigessa*'

IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 10 White-tailed mongoose (*ichneumia albicauda*) '*nech jirat faro*'	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 11 Rock hyrax (*procavia habessinica*) '*shikoko*'	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 12 serval (*felis serval*) '*aner*'
IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 13 Genet (*genetta sp.*) '*shelemitmat*'	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 14 White-tailed mongoose (*ichneumia albicauda*) '*nech jirat faro*'	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 15 Striped hyena (*hyaena hyaena*) '*shilimlim jib*'
IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 16 African civet (*civettictus civetta*) '*tiring*'	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 17 Caracal (*felis caracal*) '*dalga anbessa*'	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 18 Spotted hyena (*crocuta crocuta*) '*tera jib*'
IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 19 Simien wolf (*simenia simensis*) '*yesemen qebero/ key qebero*'	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 20 African wild-cat (*felis lybica*) '*yedur dimet*'	IMAGES NOT INCLUDED 21 ratel (honeybadger) (*mellivora capensis*) '*qefo defi'*

Bibliography

Note on bibliography – Ethiopian names consist of a personal name, followed by the father's, and sometimes grandfather's names. In a professional or polite context, people are usually addressed by their title and their personal name, thus a man named 'Alemu Girma' would be politely called 'Ato Alemu' (Mr Alemu) rather than 'Ato Girma'. While some Ethiopian scholars use first names for citations, this is not always consistent, thus two separate publications by Alemu Girma from 2012 may be cited as either 'Alemu 2012' or 'Girma, A. 2012'. The diaspora have generally adopted western practices for naming. For consistency, I have used the western naming convention, which the majority of authors cited use, unless a preferred order has been indicated.

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